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With rationality and love

Stephen R. L. Clark

RICHARD DAWKINS
The Blind Watchmaker
332pp. Longman. £12.95.
0582 44694 5

In the early 1970s, Jacques Monod's *Chance and Necessity* became a best-seller. Monod asserted that current evolutionary theory, and more broadly, standard scientific methodology, made it impossible not to realize that man was alone in an indifferent universe, that we valued whatever we did only because we arbitrarily chose to do so, and that only "the ethic of knowledge" (that we should see things without any emotional affect) was suitable for "modern man" as he headed into the socialist future. "Only the ethic of knowledge", for reasons that remain entirely obscure,

could lead to socialism. It prescribes institutions dedicated to the defence, the extension, the enrichment of the transcendent kingdom of ideas, of knowledge and of creation - a kingdom which is within man, where progressively freed from material constraints and from the misleading servitudes of animism, man could at last live authentically.

It is hard to understand how anyone could ever have taken this very seriously - a demonstration of the enormous social prestige of "scientism", especially Nobel prize-winners, even when they speak entirely outside their discipline and competence.

The one fragile merit of Monod's book was that it directed his readers' attention to the central question of a properly critical philosophy: how shall we live, what standards shall we acknowledge, what can we reasonably claim to know, if the world, including ourselves, is what we think we have good reason to suppose? What difference does it or should it make to us that the human species has evolved through the natural selection of accumulated variations from the same stock as all other creatures in the world? What difference does it or should it make that the variations which are subject to natural selection are not produced with a view to any goals that existing organisms may have? Human beings transported to Mars would not suddenly begin to conceive children magically adapted to Martian conditions, even if some lucky variations were selected that would have had no advantage in non-Martian conditions. Nature makes no leaps, as Darwin insisted: a new species, what eventually turns out to be a new species, is formed by the millennial accu-

mulation of minor variations that offered their possessors some reproductive advantage over their contemporary conspecifics. It is not written into the laws of nature or genetics that there should ever be a humanly intelligent species: we are what happens to have turned up, not what the universe was aiming at from the beginning. Nor are we of a radically different kind from the other animals that through the world, members of a separate kingdom: chimpanzees are not more like jellyfish than they are like people, and indeed they are so like us, biochemically and behaviourally, that the spectacle of "decent, liberal scientists passionately defending their right (to cut up living chimpanzees) if they chose without interference from the law" is, as Richard Dawkins says, a piece of breathtaking speciesism.

Dawkins has already established himself as a biological guru much superior to Jacques Monod with the publication of *The Selfish Gene* (1976), and *The Extended Phenotype* (1982). Like Monod, and like the entomologist E. O. Wilson, he has been concerned to convince the literate public that they must now take evolutionary theory seriously as the context within which to think about ourselves and the world. Some ideas that are now associated with Dawkins are hardly original (such as the concept of "memes" as the units of cultural evolution, which appeared under other names in Monod, and indeed in the late nineteenth-century philosopher C. S. Peirce). He is less concerned than Monod with the biochemical processes involved in DNA replication and more with more general truths about the replicators which are required for any form of evolution to get going: evolution in clay crystals, perhaps, or in computer programs. Unlike Monod he allows many personal touches in his argument and in his ethics. Where Monod required us to see the world "objectively", stripped of all emotional affect, and imagined that we could then arbitrarily choose our values (as if we were all criminal psychopaths), Dawkins emphasizes that a rationally grounded belief in evolution in no way detracts from the astonishment and love that one may and even must feel towards the results of that

evolution. Speaking of the "Tasmanian wolf" or thylacine, he says that "to any dog-lover the contemplation of this alternative approach to the dog design . . . this part familiar yet part utterly alien other-worldly dog is a moving experience". I do not think he would endorse the notion of "love" to be found in E. O. Wilson (with whom his name is often enough confounded): if the Wilson of *Biophilia* "loves life", it is in the same spirit that the god of hard metaphysical theism either is or ought to be conceived as something inordinately complex. Dawkins also lacks any clear grasp of what it was that Hume refuted long before Darwin: he has apparently relied upon a chance-net atheistical philosopher to assure him that Hume simply saw no need to explain living complexity, and had no genuine alternatives to offer to the "intelligent designer theory".

Dawkins's first, and most charming invention, is Biomorph Land: computer-generated figures, defined by nine quasi-genes that can vary randomly between generations, can be artificially selected to produce an extraordinary array of unexpected forms. The first figure (reproduced on p 1048 overleaf) is a simple branching tree, but by allowing the length of branches, the angle of branching, the number of branchings and so on to vary, evolution stunts, and things that look like anything from a spider to "a passable caricature of the Wykeham Professor of Logic" can be produced. All possible biomorphs sit in mathematical space, and the number of moves (unitary alterations in single quasi-genes) that can take one from one biomorph to another are easily calculated. So the accumulation of small variations can produce an enormous variety of types, though not every possible creature can be achieved from any particular starting-point within a reasonable time or a particular environment. Natural selection differs from intelligent planning in that it cannot accept temporary diminutions of fitness in order to achieve a higher fitness later on. Every variation has to be at least as good as the standard from which it varies. Natural selection must also work with its given material, so that some biological engineering, though marvellously compact and ingenious, is certainly not what any sane human engineer would devise: if it works better than the actual alternatives did, it makes no difference that a radical rethink would have improved the design, say of the chordate eye. Dawkins does not make it entirely clear that his biomorphs in mathematical space are strictly analogous only to genotypes: there is no difference in them between genotype, the in-

gineering works. Dawkins goes further: any other explanation of complexity itself takes the existence of complexity for granted: "a deity capable of engineering all the organized complexity in the world either instantaneously or by guiding evolution must already have been vastly complex in the first place". What is lacking here, as I shall argue in a moment, is any argument for the claim that the god of hard metaphysical theism either is or ought to be conceived as something inordinately complex. Dawkins also lacks any clear grasp of what it was that Hume refuted long before Darwin: he has apparently relied upon a chance-net atheistical philosopher to assure him that Hume simply saw no need to explain living complexity, and had no genuine alternatives to offer to the "intelligent designer theory".

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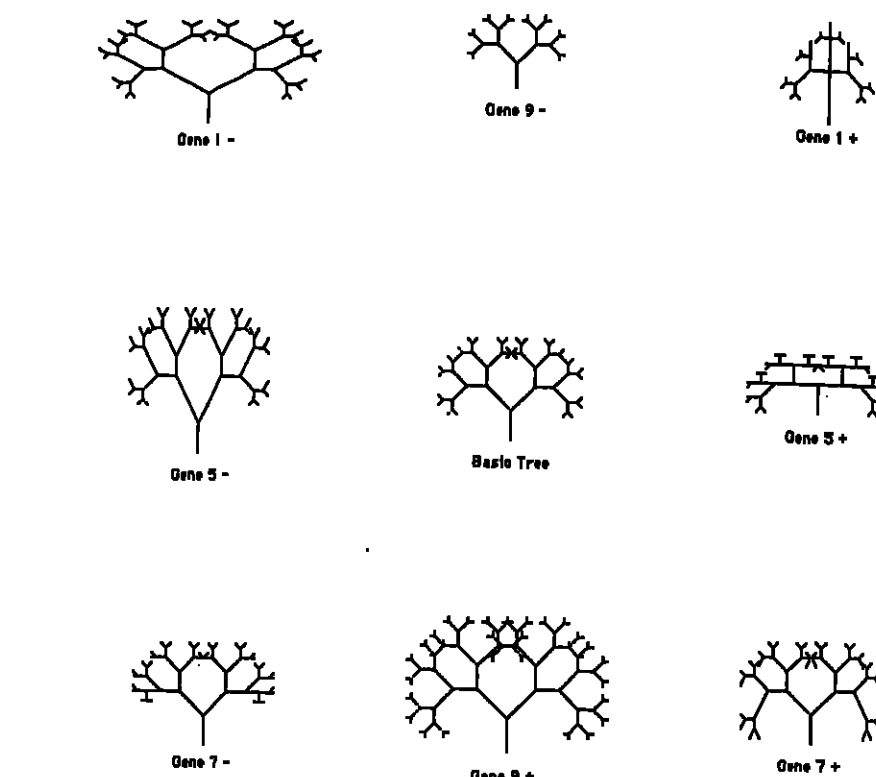
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herited formula, and phenotype, what is produced in the actual environment. He therefore need not worry about the epigenetic pathways between genetic and phenotypic "space" (a metaphor also deployed by C. H. Waddington). Convergent evolution is also not a phenomenon here: two exactly similar figures have exactly the same "genetic" formula, whereas there are plenty of phenotypically similar species with quite different genetic formulae and ancestry. This leads him to suggest that if only we could handle the enormously more complex calculations for real-life biological organisms (which is, as Monod said, exceedingly improbable), we could find out where "the dodo" is sitting on the genetic tree, and recreate it. But there are plenty of "fools' dodos" on that tree, and it is arguable (after David Hull) that even something "just like a dodo" would not in fact be a member of the dodo-species because it was not historically linked to the historical individual which is that (extinct) species. Membership of a species, at least on the "phylogenetic" account which Dawkins generally prefers, is not membership of a class of phenotypically or genetically similar individuals. Some of these qualms about Biomorph Land may be overcome if his appeal for an experienced programmer to devise ways of providing a shifting environment, programmed prey-predator relationships and so on, is answered (something like this is discussed in A. K. Dewdney's fantasy, *The Planiverse*). I gladly endorse his plea: it would at least make for a much more interesting computer game than those currently on offer.

Dawkins discusses convergence at length, spelling out the ways in which similar (even identical) "trades" or ways of making a living have been taken up in many different genetic lineages under similar pressures. Dogs and thylacines, horses and South American litopterns, ants and termites have devised astoundingly

similar strategies for dealing with their worlds: so similar indeed that one may begin to speculate, as Dawkins does not, that something more than selection among purely random (ie, not end-directed) variations is after all involved in evolution. Why are there so few really alien creatures, utterly unlike anything else, unless because there are real forms in a sort of mathematical space to which biological lineages are constantly approximating? Dawkins would doubtless dismiss the thought as "mystical": he is, however critical and intelligent, the child of his time and discipline in imagining that "woolly idealism" is beyond the reach of clarification or experiment, that the medieval church was "small minded" (though medieval theologians knew perfectly well that the earth was a mathematical point in comparison with the immensity of the heavens, let alone the infinitude of God), and that it is a "shifty evasion" to doubt that questions about God's existence are on the same level as worries about the existence of extraterrestrials.

It is here that this sensitive, charming, intelligent work entirely fails even to grasp the issue it purports to discuss. Dawkins has not set himself merely to give a convincing account of current evolutionary theory, to make it clear that the criticisms being voiced by reputable scientists are misunderstood or consciously misrepresented by people with an interest in "proving" Darwinism false (which he does). He wants to show that "the argument from design" is not merely inconclusive (since we now have another explanation than Divine Creation for the existence of living complexity), but actually not a general explanation at all, since it assumes what it sets out to explain, namely the existence of a form of living complexity called "God". He is as adamant as Monod that only things like human beings have plans, and that there is no universal providence. But if this counter-argument is to be



complete, Dawkins cannot simply ignore the theological and philosophical discussion of what it would mean to speak of God's design, or God's existence, and what forms of "the" argument from design are currently at issue. It really will not do to take Bishop Montefiore's book, *The Probability of Theism*, as a representative text, any more than the Bishop should have relied on Arthur Koestler, Fred Hoyle or Gordon Rattray Taylor for his up-to-the-minute biological information. Dawkins readily admits that he is no physicist or chemist, and feels no shame at consulting specialists in those disciplines: it does not occur to him that history, theology, philosophy are also disciplines as scholarly and truth-oriented as his own, and that he is, just possibly, not entirely expert in them all.

But isn't it "obvious" that those who believe in God the Creator, and see His handiwork in the heavens, are expressing their belief in the existence of a being of extraordinary skill and strength who has engineered the variety and subtle cruelty of the terrestrial biosphere, and who now exists alongside that world? Super-Yeti, or Mega-Big Incorporated, Galactic Engineers? Well, hardly: after all, Dawkins himself declares that "the set of all possible animals that might have evolved are perched on a gigantic tree (in hyperspace)". Does he there commit himself to a realistic belief in mystical animals on a hyperspatial tree? Would he even be pleased to agree that those possible animals (ones "with eyes in the soles of their feet", or "men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders", or Kryptonian supermen) had a metaphysical existence in Plato's heaven, so that he was lending support to the gestures toward a Platonizing formalism that I made in a preceding paragraph? Surely not: but in that case one cannot simply infer from the grammatical form of what religious people say about God that they are thereby committed to a belief in Mega-Big Incorporated, or even to a hard metaphysical realism, or dismiss questioners as engaged in "shifty evasions". We need to do some hard philosophical work, and incidentally some hard historical work on the interpretation of standard religious texts, before we can say exactly what is at issue. Dawkins was not saying that there literally were such animals, but that the tree of possibilities was a useful fiction. Theologians are at liberty to say much the same about some or even all theology.

Again: even if we agree (as in fact I do) that although "God does not belong to the class of existent things but is above all existing things, may even above existence itself" (to quote St John of Damascus) yet He is real, it is by no means obvious that He is to be conceived as "complex", especially if that means, as in Dawkins's (very Aristotelian) account, a heterogeneous something capable of making a living of some kind by virtue of its own internal structure and such that its coming-into-being is statistically improbable. Not only does Dawkins offer no argument at all for his insistence that a creative deity would have to be thus "complex", he does not notice that such complexity

is incompatible with the whole notion of metaphysical Deity. "God" names the One: not a statistically improbable Super-Yeti, but that uncategorizable perfection whose existence is either absolutely necessary or totally impossible. He does not have heterogeneous parts, since He has no parts at all.

It is of course true that there are difficulties in speaking of God, but those who attempt to rebut theism should make rather more effort to understand it. Dawkins is well aware that a great many people reject Darwinism because they have a caricatured and unreasonable picture of what Darwinists believe. He is well aware of the pressure exerted by those in the media who want to stage a good fight (between traditional neo-Darwinians and "punctuated equilibrist" say). But there are similar pressures on religion: atheists and unthinking media-managers are unconsciously conspiring with naive "fundamentalists" to paint a ridiculous picture of theism that all great doctors of the Church would have spurned as idolatry. There are, to copy one of Dawkins's memes, with suitable variations, three classes of people who want not to believe in theism: (i) those with a religious reason (for there are many other religious forms than theistic ones, including the idolatrous worship of scientific intellect); (ii) those who feel a political distaste for the institutions with which piety has been associated; and (iii) those who want to go on staging rows and sensational incidents. Actually all of us have a very good reason to want theism not to be true: if it is, we all stand under impartial and incorruptible judgment, and those who "debauch language and betray the truth" (his phrase) have more to fear than Dawkins's disapproval.

Again: when the Bible speaks of God's creating the heavens and the earth "not six thousand years ago, but 'in the beginning'" the word used, *bara*, is used only of divine activity, as elsewhere in His establishment of the People of God. God's "making" is radically unlike an engineer's, who must rely upon given material and act within an ordered universe at one point of time. His "making" is His standing under every particular change. His command of history. The one that thus creates is not an arbitrarily postulated maker of the kind that Hume's Cleanthes preferred: the claim is that the presence "known" in ritual, and private prayer, and the liberation of His people, has a hand in all that happens, that the values known in love and piety and justice are from the foundation of the world, and will - despite all present appearances - conquer. In a religious context, in short, the "argument from design" is not, as has often been supposed, an attempt to prove the existence of an otherwise unknown deity from that known thing, the world or the biosphere, but to reveal that unknown thing, the created universe, in the light of the known God of Israel. The details of that universe may be uncovered by scientific enquiry without any harm to piety, and it is worth emphasizing what is often forgotten, that the original objections to Darwin came from scientists, and not principally or at all from theologians.

That belief, as Whitehead pointed out, was historically grounded in theism, and is certainly a lot easier for a theist. What reason could a mere materialist have to suppose that the little agitation of the brain called thought (as Hume put it) could get hold of the ruling principles of the universe? A certain pragmatic skill at avoiding fires and precipices might be conceded, but it would surely be very surprising that natural selection could pick out something

theologians speaking theologically.

The role and meaning of the Creator God and of the argument from design are not obvious matters, and any serious attempt to dispense with them must grapple with hard philosophical, theological and interpretative issues which Dawkins gives no sign of recognizing. He might as well be talking about von Daniken, and concluding - reasonably enough - that we have no need to postulate extraterrestrial visitors to explain things that are just what we would expect from merely terrestrial agencies, especially as the extraterrestrials themselves would then stand in need of explanation. He himself seems to recognize the silliness of booksellers who combine "Religion and UFOs" on their shelves, but that is what his own conception of Religion, as the rationally unwarranted belief in an extra and especially peculiar existent, amounts to.

So what about the arguments from design that are currently in play among philosophically minded theologians, remembering always that they do not stand at the centre of the life of piety? What is it that some version of hard metaphysical theism might serve to explain, that remains odd or peculiar or inexplicable on other views? We may as well begin, as Dawkins does, from the statistically improbable complexities of living organisms. Even this is not deeply affected by neo-Darwinism. However likely the emergence of living complexity from unliving simples is on a merely materialist account, it will be a lot more likely in a universe guided and governed by the sempiternal purpose to create little images of the Eternal God. As long as the postulate of such a God is not itself intrinsically improbable (which it could be only if the concept was incoherent) we must admit that theism is always more likely, on the evidence, than mere materialism. If materialism were the only truth something more improbable would have happened (namely the emergence of living complexity) than would have happened if theism were true: a simple thesis of confirmation theory - "if an event E is more likely under theory T than under theory M, then E's actually happening tends to confirm T rather than M". I would add that the stronger is Dawkins's case for the thesis that evolution could only happen in the way described by neo-Darwinian theory (so that Lamarckianism, mutationism and the rest are not merely false but impossible), the less does the fact of evolution compete with God's providence. What God has "created" is a universe within which evolution does occur, and the only sort in which it could. The existence of such a universe is less likely on a merely materialist or formal basis than a theistic: therefore its existence lends theism some support. This account, which is essentially Richard Swinburne's, may be defeasible, but not by anything that Dawkins has proposed.

Hume's attack on all such arguments, of course, is, within his own terms, quite conclusive: empiricists, who draw their knowledge of what is or is not to be expected solely from their own and their friends' experience, cannot very well say that the unplanned appearance of living complexity is not absolutely to be expected - we see it happening all the time (and cannot say that it would be more likely to happen in a God-controlled universe than a non-God controlled universe: we do not have experience of both, and indeed could not possibly do so). Humean empiricism cannot accommodate ordinary science and scholarship. Two or three centuries of trial have demonstrated that science cannot continue in either a Cartesian or a Humean spirit: we need certain brute convictions about what is or is not to be assumed, which cannot be deduced either from reports of immediate experiences or from logical truism, and among other such convictions we need to believe that the universe is rationally ordered in a way that we can in principle and with honesty come to understand.

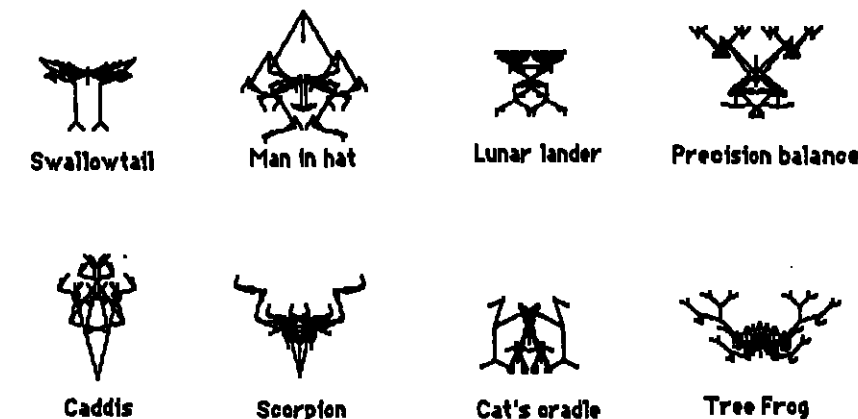
That belief, as Whitehead pointed out, was historically grounded in theism, and is certainly a lot easier for a theist. What reason could a mere materialist have to suppose that the little agitation of the brain called thought (as Hume put it) could get hold of the ruling principles of the universe? A certain pragmatic skill at avoiding fires and precipices might be conceded, but it would surely be very surprising that natural selection could pick out something

with an assured route to real knowledge. It looks very much as if evolutionary materialists have to adopt a thoroughly pragmatic conception of what it is to be "true", but once they do that they both lose their right, as William James remarked, to complain about other pragmatically successful systems such as religion, and fail to offer a realistic account of our past. Evolutionary materialism, as a realistic truth, leads to pragmatism, and that to the rejection of such materialism as a realistic truth.

Again: what about consciousness itself? Is it possible to reduce conscious experience to the motions of a merely material system? Dawkins refers to Thomas Nagel's article on "What it is like to be a bat" (reprinted in *Mortal Questions*), but seems to have missed the point. He responds by suggesting that the bat's experience may well be very much like ours, even though its physical basis is sonar rather than light, that it is not really that difficult to find aspects of our own experience which correspond with the bat's. But of electric fish, whose sense disturbances in their electro-magnetic field, he concedes that "we cannot as subjective human beings empathize with [them] but we can as physicists understand them". But

complaint is that Dawkins does not even recognize their existence.

Dawkins's book is a response to the efforts of "creation scientists" to get equal time in American schools. Most of them, no doubt, would be as displeased by my account of theism, as by Dawkins. But Dawkins has failed even to get to grips with them. As Philip Gosse pointed out a century ago, in *Omphalos*, if God were to create a full-grown oak-tree He could not help but create something that would, when it was cut down, display a distinctive pattern of rings from which information about its wholly non-existent past could be derived. If He creates the cliffs of Dover, He cannot but be creating something that will, when it is inspected, reveal the pattern of unnumbered animalcules that never really lived. Any created universe, except one created as a primeval atom, will carry with it "evidence" of a non-existent past. Fossil records, fascinating patterns of biochemical and behavioural resemblance, even contemporary experience of artificial selection of new varieties, are only what must be expected in a world created as an ordered whole by the act of the Living God. None of these things, accordingly, is evidence against Genesis. Gosse's point was mockingly



that is a considerable admission: there is something it is like to be a bat or an electric fish, but not something that we can deduce or discover simply from a study of their neurology. There is no discoverable theory to explain just why certain wave-lengths (and if Dawkins's guess is right certain sonar echoes) "produce" in us (or bats or dolphins) the experience of "being scarlet". Indeed there seems no link at all between any overt, selectable feature and the existence of subjective consciousness. Dawkins himself sometimes slips into speaking of, for example, bats as machines much like unconscious guided missiles (which has been the dominant paradigm amongst animal behaviourists): if there could be successfully computerized robots which we would not be tempted to believe were actually conscious, why should bats be, or we ourselves? Behaviourists have sometimes taken the bold step of insisting that "being conscious" is simply being, in an overt behavioural sense, awake (so that robots would be). More recent physicalists have tried to maintain, what Dawkins mentions in passing, that "really our percept is an elaborate computer model in the brain".

It is no mere appeal to the Principle of Personal Incredulity (which Dawkins deservedly mocks) to say that I find this claim not simply incredible, but incomprehensible. There is a serious doubt that natural selection could select genuinely conscious beings: that we are in fact conscious (and so no doubt are the bats) is better explained by agreeing that Consciousness is at the foundation of things. Perhaps, as Peirce said (who was by no means anti-scientific, anti-Darwinian, or incoherently mystical), "physical events are but degraded or undeveloped forms of psychical events". Perhaps the One Original Consciousness has chosen to experience its world from a multiplicity of apparently separated points of view. These theories at least render the existence of our consciousness more comprehensible, more expectable than does any materialist theory (even if they do not "explain" consciousness in general - that will require further theologizing); so, once again, they are to be preferred (and spared hard work). Attempts can be and have been made to answer both these arguments - from the success of rational technique and from consciousness - for the inadequacy of a "merely materialist" neo-Darwinianism. My

misrepresentation as requiring us to believe in a God that put fossils there to test our faith, but was no such thing. If we do none the less believe in an evolutionary past it cannot be by simple deduction from contemporary evidence, but by metaphysical and religious decision. If others choose to make other decisions, or to read the record only with a view to uncovering nested hierarchies and Platonic forms, it is obvious that they should be excluded from the schools?

Suppose indeed that such "creation scientists" are entirely wrong, that neo-Darwinian theorists are in all essentials accurate. Does it follow that neo-Darwinian theory alone should be taught in schools? There are plenty of true theories that should not be taught in schools at all (the theory and practice of making petrol bombs for example). There are other things than truth that may need to be taught. Those who oppose "fundamentalist" attempts to "balance" the education of children miss the point entirely when they concentrate on "scientific" issues. It is a philosophical issue, and a political one. Some people distrust all experts, who seem likely to subvert traditional certainties and morals; some distrust Darwinians especially for the political theses they have (only in the past?) maintained; some wish only for the maximum diversity and liberty of opinion. To answer them would be an interesting and imposing task: Dawkins does not.

What Dawkins does successfully is very good: *The Blind Watchmaker* is as clear, as enthralling, as convincing an account of neo-Darwinian theory as I have read. His attack on Lamarckianism, in particular, should be required reading in all philosophy of science courses, and his elaboration of Cairns-Smith's theories concerning the pre-biological evolution of clay is a delight. His opposition to dogmatic vivisectionists and his appreciation of the marvellous diversity and ingenuity of the world are very welcome. Where Monod insisted that "the truth" is only to be known by stripping the world of all emotional affect (so that one's child is "really" only a piece of biochemical machinery?), Dawkins does not permit his own metaphors to subvert his love and admiration for the creatures he studies (though I think he admires computers a little too much). He is one step nearer the response of an intelligent piety: that the truth is known through love, awe, worship.

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After a death

Michael Edwards

JACQUES ROUBAUD
Quelque chose noir: Poèmes
 152pp. Paris: Gallimard, 79 fr.
 2 07 070494 X

This is a harrowing book, about the death of Jacques Roubaud's wife. It says what it means, with a directness unusual in contemporary French poetry. It expresses the emotions of a real-life "I" in a way which Roubaud's earlier poetry has not led one to expect. Even the blanks in the phrasing, which before served metric or rhythmic functions, suggest difficulties in breathing, perhaps sob.

Roubaud manages to write the book partly by refusing poetry, and observing its inadequacy. The starkness of a personal experience renders unacceptable the lyrical, elegiac tone, and the dignified things that one might say in such circumstances; it also makes poetry itself, the "registre rythmique de la parole", seem a grotesque lie. The very refusal is restrained: there is no blatant mockery or angry satire, merely a desire to write verse as poor and unpleasant as the coffee Roubaud chooses to drink. The poems are assembled from "phrases" rather than lines, from the "débris" of poems, actual or potential, which he might have written had he not insisted on writing these.

"Je suis devant les mots avec mécontentement", Roubaud says, not near the beginning but at the end of the book, and this is a strange but maybe necessary position for a poet to be forced into. Writing here is a physical and unwilling business, in which he learns a kind of vanity in language, as in the world. The death of the lover, as of the friend – that event so cruelly conventional in poetry – gives access to the mortality and "emptiness" of a world, so that the title *Quelque chose noir* names the world as well as the book. In writing about death, he also comes to accept that death is

already involved in writing. To repeat his wife's name when she was alive was erotic and meaningful. "Parole autour d'un corps vivant", whereas her name in a book is a designation as rigid as a corpse. In confronting death he realizes that the world, being mortal, is not obedient to his linguistic constructions, that the simple existence of death undermines the writer's claim to impose an order and to control reality by his "raisons de langue".

The book begins: "Je me trouvais devant ce silence inarticulé un peu comme le bois", which is a precise statement of where all writing begins. It also includes the fact that, as the woman concentrates the world ("J'ai été le monde", Roubaud has her say later), so the silence of her dead body concentrates the inarticulate silence of the world. Yet, if one can speak in such terms in the face of grief, it is also the death of the loved woman that makes poetry possible. The first effect of her loss was to reduce Roubaud himself to silence for almost two-and-a-half years, but it did eventually lead to this book, and Roubaud recalls elsewhere that his very first poems were written after another death.

His wife's death enables him (such an expression is shocking, but it belongs to the sad paradox of elegy) even to renew certain aspects of poetry, and to move close to its source. He makes clear the ontology of eroticism, for example, in which a woman is the focus of a male poet's desire for the world, and through his desire for a dead woman he also transforms eroticism, especially in the extraordinary poem "Pornographie". More profoundly, poetry is by nature vocative, and most of these poems are addressed to his wife, so that the vocative too encounters death. He calls, however, not to no one, to a mere absence, but to someone who has disappeared, to a "rien-tel... ce bipôle impossible". Ideas of positive and negative heel over, and he finds himself writing a poetry neither about something nor about nothing, but about an oxymoronic movement between the two. The thinking is often that of a

professor of mathematics, but when Roubaud writes: "Te nommer c'est faire briller la présence d'un être antérieur à la disparition", one senses the emotion which impels the thought, and also how close Roubaud is to a tradition which he seems to reject while acknowledging its power, a tradition where this "naming you" is what is left of the Adamic naming after Adam's fall, while the anterior presence which can be made to "shine" in poetry is a sign of Eden.

His "mécontentement formel", moreover, does not result in formlessness. On the contrary, the book is shapely, and consists of nine sections, each of nine poems, each of nine parts. A discreet but insistent aesthetic concern has been allowed to surface, and among the associations of the number nine are, after all, the Muses, whose mother, the origin of poetry and most appropriately of the elegiac, is Memory. One of Roubaud's always surprising accomplishments is to find, for each of his volumes, a totally original outward form, as in *E*, a sonnet sequence reviewed in terms of set theory and the game of "Go", or *Trente et un au cube*, whose development is governed by the thirty-one syllables of the Japanese tanka. *Quelque chose noir*, which could have been called *Neuf au cube*, offers yet another new prosody, so as to articulate extreme pain with a maximum of elegance and a minimum of fuss.

It is an elegy for our time, in that it rejects the heaven which opens for Beatrice and the ghosts which survive in the atheism of Hardy, and in that it explores overtly the relation between poetry and death. Roubaud asks in effect how one can write about a dead lover, how one can "say" her – how one can get from the silence or groanings, which alone seem proper, to a work of poetry. By pursuing his hostility to poetry he discovers a language which is usable, and by continuously facing death he descends progressively further into the meaning of poetry. He has written a thoroughly modern "poème d'amour".

Christian figures and events, in particular the Annunciation, the Virgin Mary and that most humane of the Evangelists, St John.

In this book, however, he has gained a greater freedom of control over his difficult material. Having briefly invoked *l'Ange, l'amour et la mort*, Guez Ricord leads off into an evening spent in Ravenna where an apparently fortuitous crossing-of-paths with "Deux amoureux [qui] viennent de s'adosser aux pierres grises d'un sarcophage" becomes the occasion for a series of carefully sustained digressions on love and death.

This gives way to the book's central episode, an esoteric journey through Rome that will culminate in the death of the narrator's companion, the mysteriously gifted Jean, and his eventual resurrection a few pages further on for a meeting among the cathedral precincts at Tréguier. Here, after performing an elaborate series of rites involving a mirror and a reproduction of the Richard Dadd painting, "Come unto these Yellow Sands", the two companions

participate in a kind of transformation of space that will bring their adventures together to a close, for the chapel has re-formed around them.

Le lendemain on constata que la chapelle avait été murée, on appela en vain. Plusieurs jours plus tard la chapelle avait retrouvé sa disposition ancienne. Nulle trace de Jean et Jeanne si ce n'est deux anneaux qu'un enfant retrouvait en jouant sur le sol.

The book concludes with three short sections of Ricord at his most unflinchingly hermetic as he descends on the mysteries of the Annunciation in a language that, though striking, still manages to obscure far more than it clarifies. Coming as it does at the tail-end of a book that, for fatalistic realism, is every bit as convincing as the best surrealist works (Breton's *L'Amour fou*, say, or, in the cinema, Buñuel's *Cet obscur objet de désir*) it is mildly disappointing, but that is only a very minor complaint with regard to what, in almost every other respect, is an exceptional piece of writing.

tle and elusive work. The *Heimweh* of the German Romantics is the word that perhaps best conveys something of the feeling most often distilled in Schéhade's apparently artless works. Neither naive nor sophisticated, the reverie embodied in both his poetry and plays is rooted in Levantine popular tradition and legend.

The title sequence of the present collection is predominantly autumnal and elegiac in character. The poet assembles images of past epiphanies and once more evokes a quintessential absence. A lifelong fidelity is re-affirmed in cadences of quiet resignation, as poignant as those to be heard in the last of Schumann's *Kinderszenen*. Yet though the final word is *enigme*, half-way through the sequence the poet affirms:

C'est pas des mots pour rien ce poème
 C'est pas un objet pour se faire
 C'est pas un objet pour se faire

Looking to this world lyrically

Stephen Romer

MICHEL DEGUY
 Given Giving: Selected poems
 Translated by Clayton Eshelman
 189pp. University of California Press. £18.25.
 0520047281
 YVES BONNEFOY
 Things Dying Things Newborn: Selected poems
 Translated with an introduction
 by Anthony Rudolf
 106pp. The Menard Press, 8, The Oaks,
 Woodside Avenue, London N12 5A.
 0903400936

There can be no two ways about it: contemporary French poetry is difficult. That is all the more reason therefore warmly to welcome the pioneering efforts of Clayton Eshelman, who has translated Michel Deguy, and Anthony Rudolf who has considerably reworked and added to his versions of Yves Bonnefoy. Deguy and Bonnefoy are significant poets, and they provide an instructive contrast. Bob flirted with Surrealist doctrine and practice, and largely rejected it on the grounds that it posited a better world elsewhere. Both Bonnefoy and Deguy are intent on this world, where-to borrow Bonnefoy's terminology, fully to explain which would require a philosophical essay – the only true *présence* or *vrai lieu* can be found. But in certain essential ways they could not be more different. Deguy is mercurial, at times prosaic, at times breath-takingly lyrical, and above all inclusive – of philosophy, linguistics, ethnology, geography. Bonnefoy's work is rigorously exclusive, part of the stern process he calls *décrire*; for a poet of his weighty erudition, his vocabulary is astonishingly pure, and practically devoid of proper names and allusion.

Eshelman translates accurately, keeping as close as possible to the French (it would be perilous to stray, since Deguy takes a great deal of following in the original). Deguy succeeds best, in this view, when he is not tempted by surrealist image-sequences (their randomness often more apparent – troublingly so – in English than in French, perhaps because of the weight of concrete reference English confers on them). In the selection from *Out-Die* there are poems like "Le ciel comme un enfant", "Cette dame et sa fenêtre", "J'ai la prend par la taille" which should be read by all those (and there are many) inclined to dismiss modern French poetry as irredeemably abstract.

In his introduction, which reads like a personal *hommage* and *éloge* to Bonnefoy, Anthony Rudolf aptly describes the effect of Bonnefoy's poetry as "hypnotic"; this is due in part to its constant reiteration and interweaving of key words and images whose prosaic meaning can never be wholly delivered – and therein resides the fleeting mystery of *présence* with which Bonnefoy's poetry is charged. In the concentrated purity of his diction – the sense one receives that the language has been seined again and again, and only its essential grain has been preserved – he is a true heir of Mallarmé, and we must await another Jean-Pierre Richard to reveal to us the layers of meaning that words such as "terre", "barque", "Phénix", "rive" and "passeur" accrue in this poetry. Bonnefoy is served here by an excellent translator; Rudolf's versions are generally faultless, faithful and rhythmically satisfying. It is a pity, however, that he has translated only one section of Bonnefoy's last book, *Donc le leur du seuil*, for here above all the poetry is arranged according to musical structure, and for a full understanding we need its whole thematic development with variations. I was sorry, also, not to find the little suite *Dévoation* translated; it is unique in Bonnefoy's work for its simplicity, being little more than a list of his favourite places and paintings (mostly Italian). It is a reticent psalm of praise, and more than anything reveals how Bonnefoy is committed to a visible, tangible world.

Talent concealed, genius announced

Victor Brombert

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER
 Correspondance générale
 Edited by Claudine Lacoste-Veyseyre and Pierre Laubriet.
 Tome 1:450pp. Tome II:381pp.
 Geneva/Paris: Droz
 CHARLES BAUDELAIRE
 Selected Letters
 Translated and edited by Rosemary Lloyd
 268pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £17.95.
 029778904 X
 My Heart Laid Bare and other prose writings
 Translated by Norman Cameron
 225pp. Soho Book Company, 1 Brewer Street,
 London W1. £5.95.
 094816607 X

Even though Baudelaire dedicated *Les Fleurs du mal* to Théophile Gautier, hailing him as the impeccable poet and supreme *magicien* *des lettres* of the French language, literary history has not been kind to him. Gautier is remembered in his flamboyant red gilet on the stormy opening night of *Hernani*, and later as the pre-Parnassian, somewhat icy author of *Émaux et Camées*, the proponent of art for art's sake, the man who insolently maintained that only that can be beautiful which is perfectly useless. But the provocatively sensuous author of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, the creator of outstanding tales such as "Jettatura" and "Spirite", the delightful travel writer of *Voyage en Espagne*, are most often forgotten.

The first two volumes of Gautier's *Correspondance générale* will not enhance his reputation. There is hardly one interesting letter. The fact is that this enormously talented writer did not like to write letters. Was he too busy with his stories, his poems, his reviews, his newspaper columns, his editorial chores, his social life – or simply too lazy? Gautier himself said that he was not good at corresponding, that he felt like a ballet-dancer who cannot dance a quadrille at an ordinary ball. His friends knew that the best of him was to be had in conversation.

When he felt like it, Gautier could of course write charming, witty, colourful letters. There is one such to Heine, but it is in reality a newspaper column for *La Presse* in the form of a letter: a review of the ballet *Gliselle* which he himself had written with Jean Coralli. It is a lovely text which evokes poetically the vaporous and nocturnal legends of elves and nixes, paying tribute to Heine who inspired the work. The other outstanding letter is addressed to his close friend Gérard de Nerval, at that point travelling in the Near East. But once again it is an article in the form of a letter: an account of the performance of *La Péri*, another ballet he wrote with Coralli, which featured the dancers Carlotta Gisi and Lucien Petipa, the brother of Marius Petipa, the creator of modern ballet.

With the exception of a few lively but not very revealing letters to his family, written during his travels to Spain and later to North Africa, most of these collected missives deal with fairly trivial matters: money, theatre tickets, contractual arrangements with publishers, his duties as literary editor of a journal. Even the letters written from such places as Burgos, Madrid, Granada, or Seville, are without much substance if compared with the twelve instalments of the *Lettres d'un feuilletoniste* which described Spain for the readers of *La Presse* (May–September 1840). Gautier obviously reserved the best of his talent for his professional activities.

As a human document, the correspondence does of course have its value. It confirms the image of a congenial, warm-hearted, playful, hedonistic Gautier, capable of generosity and even tenderness. There is no trace in him of any pettiness or professional jealousy. He respects talent, and as a reviewer stands ready to give his support to artists. He unfailingly recognizes greatness: that of Hugo and Berlioz, of Balzac and Flaubert, of Fanny Elssler and Marie Taglioni. And there are wit and joviality throughout; whether he gives news of Parisian society, refers to the rivalry between publishers and authors, evokes Balzac as a "bon gros porc très petit d'esprit et très agréable à vivre", or indulges in obscenities while on a trip

to Belgium with Gérard de Nerval.

This is hardly enough, however, to make for a great correspondence. More significant letters perhaps lie ahead. In the meantime, the editor, Claudine Lacoste-Veyseyre, and Pierre Laubriet who directs the series, should be congratulated for these first volumes, which bring us to Gautier's thirty-fifth year. The editorial work is careful, the letters are thoughtfully annotated; and it was a good idea to include letters written to Gautier by various correspondents, thus filling gaps and providing a sense of dialogue. A useful index of these correspondents concludes each volume. As an experience in reading, these two volumes fail, however, to be gripping.

Baudelaire's correspondence is quite another matter. One is struck immediately by the psychological drama, the tragic vocation. His earliest letters to his family already betray the pathos of latent guilt. The later letters extend the anguish of the child into adulthood. Discontent with the self, obsession with failure, the anger of frustration and the fear of forever being misunderstood, inform his letters to his mother after his much-resented step-father died. These letters are at the same time embarrassing and moving. On the one hand, Baudelaire pleads with his mother and hopes to replace her dead husband; on the other, he cannot forgive her, his deep-seated jealousy finds expression in petulance and misogyny. When he complains to his mother about Jeanne Duval, it is easy to see that he wants her to understand that his denunciation includes all women. Pride and despondency alternate, as he refers to his wounds and to his inability to cure himself. He vituperates against the "racaille moderne" of successful writers, taking comfort in his "gift for impertinence". Deep down, however, he knows that his sickness is incurable. His reveries, dejection, discouragement, indecision, his eternal procrastination are the symptoms of a "frightful illness" against which medicine is powerless. This "frightful illness", together with the love-horror of solitude, and the temporal anguish that erodes his will-power, are the common themes of some of his best poetry. In particular, the letter of May 6, 1861, should be studied by anyone interested in his complicated relation to his mother, his depressions, his yearning for faith and salvation, his sense of total abandonment.

Rosemary Lloyd's selection of Baudelaire's letters, which she herself has translated, could not fail to include this one. But her choice is intelligent throughout, and on a more modest scale her work compares in quality with Francis Steegmuller's translation and edition of selected letters of Flaubert – with the additional feature that she respects the integrity of individual letters. This is a sensitive, accurate and literate rendering of the original text – in other words, a fine professional job. The introduction is crisp, informative, to the point; Ms Lloyd catches the tone of the letters admirably. In particular, she succeeds in bringing out the threatening, angry, weak and pitiful aspects. Comparing the translation with Baudelaire's own phrasing, I have repeatedly been struck by the skilful turns with which some difficult points were negotiated. Ms Lloyd is sensitive to linguistic nuances and her translation is on the whole precise and true to the spirit of the original. We need more such translations.

Moving though these letters may be in their infantile peevishness, Baudelaire's great prose is to be found elsewhere: in the prose poems of course, but also in his critical writings (above all *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*) and in the intimate notes grouped under the headings of *Fusées* and *Mon Coeur mis à nu*. Sartre took these as a point of departure for denouncing the nineteenth-century artist's commitment to false freedom and self-declared aristocratic *déclassement*. Sartre's Baudelaire yearns for mystic communion with the artists of the past; he sees himself as posthumous while still alive. The real interest of the intimate writings, however, is not their psychological or sociological nature, but the light they cast on two major themes: the urban setting and the notion of the solipsistic artist's escape into impersonality. Walter Benjamin was surely right in stressing the fertile shock effect of the modern city on a sensibility such as Baudelaire's. The poet himself, in his letter to Arsène Houssaye, that serves as a preface to *Le Spleen de Paris*,

comments on the link between a nervous lyrical prose and intimate contact with the complicated megalopolis.

It is not picturesqueness that characterizes Baudelaire's Paris. Traumatic and anaesthetizing, the urban complex reminds most often anonymous and topographically undifferentiated. The poet-stroller, *le flâneur*, has the gift of "bathing himself in the crowd"; he seeks "universal communion" in the movement of the streets, chooses to make his domicile "amongst numbers", dreams of "wedding himself" to the crowd. Everything suggests a desire to abolish the limits between the self and others, between *moi* and *vous*. Baudelaire is explicit in *Fusées*, speaking of the "religious intoxication" of great cities: "Pantheism: I am, all are I." In *Le Spleen de Paris*, he writes about the crowds: "Multitude, solitude: terms that are equal and interchangeable for the active and fertile poet." For it is certain that Baudelaire conceives of the poet's work precisely in terms of the dialectics of personality and impersonality. "The man of genius wants to be one" – "Glory consists in remaining one." But also: "The distinctive characteristic of true poets . . . is to know how to come out of themselves . . .". The much admired "dandy" lives and sleeps in front of a mirror; the true hero finds entertainment in solitude. Yet the persona of the poet in the prose poems is proud of "having lived and suffered" in others than himself. Elsewhere Baudelaire is even more explicit, as when he speaks of the soul's "holy prostitution". The privilege and mission of the poet, for whom all is "vacant", is to develop the art of being at will "both himself and other people".

The desire to come out of the self is of course hardly innocent. Emerging from the self may well represent for Baudelaire an escape from what attracts and terrifies him most: the horrendous "marriage of a man to himself" which he evokes in his *Poème du haschisch*. Two remarkable statements tersely sum up this contradictory attraction. The first describes the painter of modern life: "He is an *I* insatiably eager for the *not-I*." The other is more autobiographical, and Baudelaire gave it the value of an epigraph. *Mon Coeur mis à nu* begins with this declaration: "De la vaporisation et de la centralisation du *Moi*. Tout est là."

I am not sure that the French "vaporisation" is adequately rendered by "distillation", which Norman Cameron gives in his generally attentive and resourceful translation (first published in 1950 and now reissued). "Research" for "étude" ("Étude de la grande maladie de l'horreur du domicile") is perhaps also not quite in keeping with Baudelaire's meaning, which to me seems closer to "meditation" or just plain "study". But these are minor and debatable points in what is a most satisfying translation. Peter Quennell's introduction to this intelligently conceived selection of Baudelaire's prose writings is also most perceptive, and there is every reason to support his statement that *Le Peintre de la vie moderne* is a "condensation of Baudelaire's theories on the relationship of art and life". The three most important chapters are happily included in this collection: on "modernity" defined in terms of the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent; on dandyism viewed as a "last gleam of heroism" in times of decadence; and above all the capital chapter in praise of cosmetics, which asserts the superiority of art and artifice over nature. It is easy to stress the polemical, anti-Rousseau stance in this chapter; but there is something more personal to it. Behind Baudelaire's hostility to nature, there is the implicit glorification of the artist as artificer.

A recent addition to the Critical Essays on World Literature series is *Critical Essays on Émile Zola* (198pp. Boston: Hall, 0 8161 8826 2). In his introduction, the editor, David Bagley, traces the generally hostile critical reception accorded the novels during Zola's lifetime but concludes that since the revival of interest in the 1950s "there is every indication that Zola's work will continue to command the attention of critics of every persuasion". Zola's contemporaries are represented in this selection by Louis Ulbach, Swinburne, Jules Lemaitre and Havelock Ellis; while among present-day commentators represented are Roland Barthes, Michel Butor, F. W. J. Hemmings and Irving Howe.

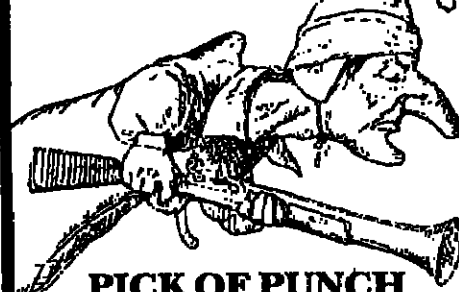
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A movement to the right

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ROBERT SOUCY
French Fascism: The first wave 1924-1933
 267pp. Yale University Press. £22.50.
 0 300103488 1
JULIAN JACKSON
The Politics of Depression in France 1932-1936
 303pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.
 0 521 26559 2

Robert Soucy begins in a somewhat unexpected manner. He finds it necessary to assert the existence of his subject: fascism, he tells us, did exist in France. This is strange because we have recently been treated to a series of expositions insisting on the fact that various forms of fascism have not merely existed in modern France but are endemic there. Nearly ten years ago the Israeli historian, Zeev Sternhell, published a study of the growth in France of a pre-fascist ideology, and in a subsequent work he defined fascism in such a generous and nebulous form as to be able to fix the label "fascist" upon the widest variety of French thinkers and politicians. The provocative and flamboyant philosopher, Bernard-Henri Lévy, has also sought to denounce the pervasiveness of fascist thought in the French intellectual tradition, while other critics have found similarities between writers long regarded as fascist (such as Drieu la Rochelle) and others to whom the designation has seldom been applied (such as Malraux). Pierre Bourdieu has claimed that those who, in the 1930s, sought to break out from the routine of conventional politics and find "une troisième voie" in economic planning and direction, followed a path which brought them "souvent aux portes du fascisme".

Professor Soucy's concern is entirely with those political historians, such as René Rémond, Jean Touchard and Serge Bernstein, who have argued that the political traditions and habits of France were such that they permeated even those who claimed to be challenging them. Parties and groups considered to be fascist are often versions, and sometimes unimportant versions, of a conservatism, a radicalism, or an adventurous sentimentalism, frequently to be found in French political life, which bear no relationship to what happened in Italy or in Germany. Soucy does not accept this argument. While agreeing that there are links between traditional French conservatism and fascist movements he believes that there were important differences in tactics and style; and while agreeing that French fascists were tinged with ideas which were economically and socially radical, he believes that the professed socialism of certain fascists was false. He disagrees with Eugen Weber over the Action Française, claiming that it was fascist, and as he is not prepared to agree that antisemitism is a *sine qua non* of fascism, he maintains that those groups, such as the Jeunesses Patriotes, which welcomed Jews among its ranks, should also be regarded as fascist.

Fascism emerged in France during the inter-war period in two waves: the first peaked in 1926, and the second in 1934. Soucy examines the first wave and his central preoccupation is with the short-lived movement, *Le Faisceau*, and its founder Georges Valois. As the name suggests, *Le Faisceau* (officially founded on Armistice Day 1925), was an open imitation of Mussolini's fascism, and its blue-shirted followers were instructed to imitate the black-shirts in various ways. The proclaimed aim of *Le Faisceau* was to replace the Republic with a dictatorship and with an Assembly appointed by the dictator in which war veterans and representatives of the professions (rather than the regions) would be dominant. Its *raison d'être* was to oppose the Cartel des Gauches, which had won the election of 1924, and which was accused of incompetence in financial affairs and of aiding communism and indiscipline, both at home and in Europe. *Le Faisceau* was thus anti-communist, anti-socialist, and, in its anti-Herriot inspiration, against everything that the Republic stood for.

The main reason why Valois interests the historians of fascism is not so much because he was the effective leader of the most significant movement of the 1920s, as he symbolizes (as Doriot and Daut were later to do) the movement towards the right, from

anarchism and syndicalism to a position which is invariably associated with a philosophy of order and authority. The explanation, as put forward by Soucy in a long chapter, is disappointing. It has to do with Valois's travels abroad and a consequent awakening of nationalism, his marriage and subsequent view of the family, his experience of syndicalism in a Paris publishing house and his realization that there was no democracy at the workplace, his return to religion, and his conversion to the idea of having a modern capitalism which would function effectively. The experience of the war was essential for him; he always considered that war was a vital part of human existence and that military virtues were the finest of all. In all this one can see an evolution common to many individuals at different times, and also, in the case of Valois, an individual who tended to shift his ground frequently, if not easily, and who always found it possible to contain various contradictions. It is typical that while putting forward the idea of having a dictator in France, he neither proposed himself, nor put forward with any consistency anyone else's name. When the Second World War came, he joined the resistance movement in spite of his age, was arrested by the Gestapo and died in Belsen.

Is it possible to draw meaningful conclusions about French fascism from such an individual? It is true that one finds in *Le Faisceau* a group anxious to establish itself and to assert its identity, as well as an assertive nationalism and heady talk of overthrowing a decadent parliamentarianism by means of a *coup d'état*. But otherwise Soucy's main argument is to suggest

that if Valois at times appealed to communists, or showed sympathy with workers, this was less than true to his position.

That position was more akin to a restless and ambitious form of conservatism than the more immobile, traditional conservatism of the French centre-right, and it is here that Soucy makes his most specific claims for the existence of something which can be called fascist. He stresses that Valois received financial support from business interests which would not have supported him had he been genuinely concerned with promoting left-wing ideas (although a somewhat uncritical acceptance of police reports is not always convincing evidence as to where Valois's funds came from).

It is clear that in Soucy's work 1934 is going to be the turning-point in the history of French fascism and the riots and demonstrations of February in that year will mark the moment when the greatest apprehension was felt about the fascist danger. For Julian Jackson too February 1934 is a turning-point. Not only did it mean that the Socialists had no further fear of discrediting themselves as a supposedly revolutionary party by associating with the Radicals and with the parliamentary régime since they were opposing a fascist threat, but it was also clear that the economic problem could no longer be ignored. From that date onwards there was increasing financial uncertainty, with periodic flights of gold increasing the day-to-day difficulties of government spending and of funding the debt. The need to carry out economic policies by means of decree suggests that the very republican values that someone such as Laval was meant to represent seemed to be

in danger of subversion. The great virtue of Dr Jackson's research is to show how the traditional picture of the French economy in the 1930s has now to be refined. The international depression struck France belatedly compared with other countries, yet signs of it, and a realization of what they meant, are to be found earlier than is often thought. France also failed to recover at the same time as other countries and the depths of the depression were reached there just when other countries were showing signs of revival, but it was always relatively mild, and did not threaten a catastrophic collapse as in America or Germany. Governments put their faith in deflation and there was a near hysterical defence of the franc against devaluation, but more politicians than is generally recognized foresaw the eventual inevitability of devaluation. Jackson shows that while many politicians were only too ready to admit to their ignorance in economic matters, there was a bewildering number of ideas and policies circulating. It could have added to his rich harvest of evidence by demonstrating that in 1933 Pierre Mendès France, usually regarded as the man who, when in power, was most clearly to demonstrate an understanding of the theory and practice of economics, supported policies of deflation and rejected the idea.

In his determination to show the nuances of opinion and the details of negotiation within the different political parties and groups, Jackson is occasionally confusing, but in general his narrative is clear and his analysis convincing. It could be that he is a little unfair to Flandin whose government from November 1934 to May 1935 has often been presented as the only occasion when France had a possible recovery programme. He rejects the idea that Flandin was brought down by a conspiracy of bankers and right-wing politicians, explaining it rather in terms of the failure of the government's economic policy, and implies that had there been signs of economic recovery then Flandin's fragile majority might have been sustained, although not for long. However, this could well be to underestimate the importance of political manoeuvring and to overestimate the objectivity with which the politicians viewed economic performance. The animosity which existed between Herriot and Daladier among the Radicals was paralleled by the rivalry between Flandin and Tardieu, and the latter's return to Paris in April after a six-month absence was seen as a significant move. It is noticeable too that it was after the municipal elections, in which the communists made some gains, that confidence in the government became most shaken. It is tempting to say, as has been said in very different circumstances, that everything begins with finance and ends in politics.



Roman women donating their wedding rings to the Italian nation during the campaign in Abyssinia. This photograph is reproduced from *Storia fotografica dell'Impero fascista 1935-41* by Luigi Goglia (302pp. Rome: Laterza. L40,000. 88 420 2646 8).

Staying popular

Patrick McCarthy

DAVID FORGACS (Editor)
Rethinking Italian Fascism: Capitalism, Populism and Culture
 240pp. Lawrence and Wishart. £15 (paperback, £5.95).
 0 8531 5630 1

Rethinking Italian Fascism starts from the premise that both the traditional liberal and the crude Marxist interpretations of Mussolini's régime are inadequate. The former treats Fascism as a totalitarian interlude, the latter as a mask for monopoly capitalism. David Forgacs and his collaborators, who are influenced not merely by Gramsci but also by Niccolò Poulantzas, perceive Italian Fascism as a special phase in the development of capitalism and also as a movement that had a certain autonomy from capitalism.

The difficult question is to define what this special phase was and where Fascism was or was not autonomous. It is no criticism of this intelligent book to say that it cannot offer any precise answers. It does, however, make suggestions. If one discards the liberal concept of the totalitarian interlude, then the roots of Fascism may be sought in earlier history and its

disappearance is less significant than it seems. Jonathan Steinberg's analysis of Calabrian Fascism shows that Mussolini's followers tried and failed to dislodge the landlord class which compromised with them, survived their defeat in 1943 and maintained its power while the Christian Democrats governed in Rome.

Forgacs notes that, since Italian Fascism was not in the Nazi sense totalitarian, it may be compared with right-wing governments in liberal states. This is dangerous territory and he is suitably cautious in sketching parallels with Thatcherism; Roderick Kedward is less so in suggesting comparisons with Giscard d'Estaing's presidency.

Lino Pertile's chapter on Fascism and literature follows in the tracks of the many Italian historians who have demonstrated that, while Mussolini allowed high culture a certain freedom, Italian writers, like Eugenio Montale, failed to be critical of Fascism because they were too elitist and too private. This is correct, although, if one were to borrow Luisa Passerini's concept of a dissent that is seemingly unpolitical, one might argue that high culture offered its adherents a space that was at least non-Fascist. This is how the young Pier Paolo Pasolini interpreted Ungaretti's poetry, even though Ungaretti was a declared admirer of Mussolini.

And here the liberal interpretation of Fascism

cannot easily be set aside because censorship and control of the press were regular features of Mussolini's rule. When Pasolini began to write he had few outlets other than the magazines of the student organizations that were controlled by the government. Moreover, Pertile points out that one reason why the Florentine review *Solaria* was closed down was that it had published Elio Vittorini's novel *Il garofano rosso*. Fascism had, however, subtle methods of absorbing rather than depressing the populism represented by Vittorini. In Mussolini's last years his second-generation followers were encouraged to revive the left-wing sensibility that had marked early Fascism. The student magazines became full of attacks on capitalism and calls for a committed culture. Fascism's *politicized* — to borrow a word loved of Italian commentators — was another reason why no critical political discourse could emerge.

In this book Geoffrey Nowell-Smith notes that Fascism had no specific policy for the cinema, which was shaped by much the same capitalist forces as in Britain or France, but also that Italian films were "trapped within the framework of organized consent". This was not true of French films so how did Mussolini manage it? How did Fascism prevent people from imagining alternatives to itself? That is another difficult question.

Sovereignty and the *Führerdemokratie*

Jürgen Habermas

CARL SCHMITT
Political Theory: Four chapters on the concept of sovereignty
 70pp. £14.95. 0 262 19244 6
The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy
 132pp. £17.50. 0 262 19240 3
 MIT Press

Carl Schmitt is a difficult figure to discuss in an Anglo-Saxon context. Both his intellectual style and his political destiny belong to a thoroughly German tradition — even where his Catholic mentality stands in sharp contrast to the Protestant complexion of his academic environment.

Schmitt was a year older than Adolf Hitler, the man who determined his fate. He died last year in his Westphalian birthplace, Plettenburg, at the age of ninety-seven. The impassioned tone of the obituaries bears witness to the fact that even today Schmitt represents a division in the intellectual world.

Ten years ago *The Concept of the Political* appeared in English, a famous work written in 1932, in which Schmitt takes issue in passing with, among others, Harold Laski's pluralistic theory of the state. The author is familiar, of course, with the pertinent definitions of Max Weber; but he is no social scientist and an analytical concept of political power does not interest him. Schmitt investigates the "essence" of the political like a traditional philosopher. From an Aristotelean standpoint, however, the explanation which he then offers reads more like an answer to the problem concerning the essence of the "strategic". For him the "political" does not reveal itself in, for example, the binding character of decisions reached by a state authority; instead, it is supposed to manifest itself in the collectively organized self-assertion and self-defence — against external and internal enemies — of a nation enjoying "political existence". Schmitt's imagination was captured by the "storm of steel"

of the First World War, to use the title of his friend Ernst Jünger's novel. Welded together in a life or death struggle, the nation preserves its unique character against the enemy without and the traitors within. The "state of emergency" is defined by the exceptional situation of maintaining and defending the nation's own identity against the "otherness" of the enemy; it is defined by war between whole peoples and by civil war. In all cases it is "the real possibility of physical extinction" which defines the political state of emergency. Therefore an occurrence ought only to be termed "political" if it is at any rate implicitly related to such a state of emergency: all politics is essentially foreign affairs. Domestic politics, too, is subject to the various categories of danger represented by the enemy which poses a threat to existence itself. In the Expressionistic style of the day, Carl Schmitt constructs a dramatic concept of the political, in the light of which everything normally understood by the word must seem banal.

The Political Theory (1922) was intended to rehabilitate the concept of sovereign power, whereas *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* (1923) took up ideas from his essay *Politische Romanik* (1919) — which has yet to appear in the MIT Press series of translations — and settled accounts with liberalism in a merciless way. The "decisionist" theory of the state propagated by Schmitt in *The Concept of the Political* emerges seamlessly from the critique of a political thought based upon natural law which he had undertaken in his earlier work. The choice of texts for translation is thus a wise one. All the same, in view of the difficulties of reception, there would also have been a case for reversing the chronological order of his works in publication. It would at any rate have made it easier to comprehend what abysmal depths were plumbed by both these early works, if Schmitt's masterpiece — a concise study of Hobbes — had been published first. It is there, above all, that Carl Schmitt adumbrates his philosophy of the state in a single grand sweep. In addition, his *Leviathan*,

which took shape in 1938 and was published in the midst of the Nazi era, leads us to the political nucleus of Schmitt's intellectual universe.

Schmitt is at once admiring and critical of Hobbes. In him he celebrates the only major political theorist to have recognized in the rule of the sovereign the "decisionist" substance of the politics of states. He also, however, laments the bourgeois theorist who shrinks from drawing the ultimate metaphysical conclusions and, against his will, becomes the ancestor of the *Rechtsstaat*, the rule of law, based upon legal positivism.

This ambivalent evaluation is already reflected in the subtitle: *Significance and failure of a political symbol*, which refers to the Old Testament image of the Leviathan — the gigantic, devilish dragon which no power on earth could resist. The Leviathan emerges from the sea and overwhelms Behemoth, the great land power. To the Jews this struggle of the monsters had always appeared as an image of the life force of the heathens, to be feared and hated. Because he was not familiar with this subversive interpretation, Hobbes is said to have made an error in his choice of symbol. His intentions, which ran counter to the pernicious power of the mythical image, nevertheless succumbed to it. Thus the substance of the modern state represented by this image was mistakenly treated as something abnormal and against nature in the centuries that followed: "The image was not adequate to the system of thought with which it was linked The traditional Jewish exegesis rebounded against the Leviathan of Hobbes."

This mythological outline is then filled in by Schmitt with two theses drawn from the history of ideas. In the first place, he attributes his idea of sovereignty, which he had developed in 1922 in the *Political Theory*, to Hobbes. Just as Leviathan becomes the power that he is only by the subjugation of Behemoth, so the state only maintains itself as the sovereign power as long as it suppresses revolutionary resistance. The state is the constant prevention of civil war. Its

dynamic is the crushing of revolts, the continuous containment of the chaos which is inherent in the evil nature of individuals. These individuals are set upon their autonomy and would perish in the terrors of their own emancipation, were they not rescued by a power that overwhelms any other power. Sovereign is he who decides on the exception. And because the subversive forces always enter in the name of truth and justice, the sovereign who wishes to prevent an exceptional state of affairs arising must also retain the power to define what shall count as true or just in the public sphere. His power to decide is the source of all validity — not reason. The state alone may determine the public creed of its citizens.

Discussing religious creeds, however, Hobbes falls victim, Schmitt argues, to a false deduction with momentous consequences: he distinguishes between "faith" and "obedience" and declares that the state is neutral towards the citizens' private beliefs. State control extends only to public worship. It is upon this supposedly illogical distinction that Schmitt bases his second thesis. The space Hobbes left free for private religious scruples allows, in Schmitt's view, the entrance of the subjectivity of the bourgeois conscience and of private opinion, the subversive force of which unfolds gradually. This private sphere is turned inside out and extends itself into the bourgeois public realm; thus bourgeois society renders itself valid as a rival political power, and ultimately topples Leviathan from his throne, with the authority to legislate through parliament. This scenario, however, altogether disregards the fact that Hobbes developed his concept of sovereignty from the very beginning in the context of the positivist transformation of law. Positive law requires by definition a political legislator who may no longer be tied to a higher order of norms derived from natural law — and only to the extent that he is free of the latter is he sovereign. In Hobbes's idea of a sovereign legislator, who cannot act except through the medium of positive law, the seed has thus already been sown for the evolution of the

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constitutional *Rechtsstaat*, which Carl Schmitt regards as a great misfortune – and which only emerged, as he sought to demonstrate, from the neutralization of the authority of the state in the face of private powers fuelled by faith.

This version of Schmitt's theory once again draws on earlier ideas, first developed in *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, concerning the crisis of the *Rechtsstaat*. A state with a parliamentary legislature had indeed emerged in Germany only after the First World War, under the conditions of organized capitalism in the forms dictated by a welfare state based on mass democracy. At the time, Carl Schmitt conceived this interventionist state as a system of legality that had been hijacked by the "social powers". It had been hollowed out by legal positivism and robbed of its authoritative substance. This was the result of a process, over several centuries, of the disenchantment of the once sacred power of a state which in modern times, too, could only have maintained its true sovereignty as the unity of worldly and spiritual powers. This unity had been dissolved into the dualism of state and society, and had then disintegrated into the pluralism of social powers. As "indirect powers" such as parties, trade unions and pressure groups eventually become totalitarian, though in an unpolitical form, they want power without responsibility, they recognize only opponents and not enemies; and they try to evade the dangers of genuinely "political" self-assertion. Of the power to make political decisions they retain only the compulsory character of orders issued by the state, not the existential risk of a life-and-death struggle for self-assertion.

The book on Hobbes opened up a perspective which unites these arguments of the 1920s. Weimar was seen as a period of decay: the crisis could only be overcome by means of a temporarily dictatorial utilization of Article 48, the emergency provision of the Weimar Constitution, but in the long run only by means of the "total state". Here Schmitt had Mussolini and Italian Fascism in mind in the first instance. After the Nazi seizure of power he was opportunistic enough to incorporate into his construction of the state that little twist which was necessary so that he was no longer obliged to interpret the Führer's "decisionism" (decision for its own sake) as purely Hobbesian, but as the sovereign summit of the "concrete orderings" of the people. This is the meaning of the preface to the second edition of the *Political Theory*, written in 1933, in which Schmitt hastens to develop the decisionist brand of juristic thought further into the "institutionalist" one.

In the *Leviathan* Carl Schmitt goes even further with his adaptation to Hermann Goering's Prussian Council of State. There he develops a particular history of ideas in support of the thesis already mentioned, that ultimately the Jewish exegesis of the myth rebounded against the Leviathan: Schmitt constructs an antisemitic genealogy of the enemies of the Leviathan. It begins with Spinoza, who approached the state religion as a Jewish philosopher, from outside, and opened up a dangerous breach through which freedom of thought for the individual could enter. It continues with Moses Mendelssohn and the "restless spirit of the Jews" in the orders of Freemasons and Illuminati of the late eighteenth century, who undermined the power of the state with a "sure instinct... to cripple the foreign and to emancipate their own Jewish nation". It leads finally to the emancipated Jews such as Heine, Börne and Marx, who exploit their "operational areas" in journalism, the arts and the sciences for subversion. Taken together, they have accomplished the "intellectual paralysis" of Leviathan: the idea of the state as myth.

A few years ago the first edition of Schmitt's *Leviathan* was reissued in Germany with a postscript by the editor – a disillusioned activist of the 1960s who had withdrawn his political adulation from Fidel Castro in favour of Carl Schmitt. Günter Maschke admittedly does not wish to play down the portrait gallery of Jewish ancestors of the enemies of the total state as mere lip-service – as George Schwab (the translator of the *Political Theory*) had done in his book *The Challenge of the Exception*. But he would nevertheless like to see it traced back to the model of documents of "a classic Catholic anti-Judaism". For the rest,

Maschke takes pains to see Carl Schmitt's situation during the Nazi tyranny through the latter's eyes, as far as he possibly can. Instead of a single word of self-criticism, Schmitt had presented himself as the "Benito Cereno of European international law". This is an allusion to that unfortunate captain in Herman Melville's novel, whom everybody else believes to be the master of the pirate ship on which he is in fact a hostage, obliged to risk his life.

In Britain and in the United States people may wonder why a man like Carl Schmitt still exercises considerable intellectual influence in the Federal Republic. The reasons may be found in the first place in the quality of his work. Carl Schmitt was, as his brilliant *Constitutional Theory* of 1928 shows, a competent state jurist, whom even the most influential jurists of the Weimar period took seriously as a sharp-witted adversary. Furthermore, Carl Schmitt was a good writer, who could combine pregnant concepts with startling, ingenious associations of ideas. (This art of formulation does not, unfortunately, shine through the English translation.) For the rest, Schmitt was an intellectual who devoted his knowledge as a specialist until the 1930s to diagnoses of his time which give proof of a highly developed sensibility. Finally, he retained the bearing of the metaphysician – despite the clarity of his language – who descends into the depths and at the same time unmasks a base reality.

These qualities alone, however, would not have outweighed the discreditable effect produced by his crude antisemitism and his toadying to the Nazi authorities, had not other factors come into play. Schmitt had, and still has, important followers all the way up to the Federal Supreme Court. With Ernst Forsthoff, Schmitt had an influence upon the controversy in the 1950s among state jurists about the relationship between the *Rechtsstaat* and the welfare state. Perhaps even this constellation would still not have sufficed, if the mentality of the *Junkkonservativen* (Young Conservatives) were not so fascinating, now as ever, and had the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* not made every effort to conserve this spirit for many years.

Let us recall what happened. A painful void had been left behind in the 1920s by the demise of right-wing Hegelianism, after the sociological enlightenment offered by Max Weber had stripped the authority of the state of any aura of kinship with reason and religion. At the time, people wanted to put the loss of this aura behind them, but could not reconcile themselves to the banality which had come to mark the business of a bureaucratic state governed by party democracy. On the one hand, people had become cynical and the merely mechanical nature of the enterprise was transparent to them; on the other, the substance and the mystery of sovereignty, battered as it had become, was to be restored – even if that meant an act of unheard-of exaltation. This vague yearning could be satisfied by a Carl Schmitt, who drew on the same experiences as others of his generation: Martin Heidegger, Gottfried Benn and even Ernst Jünger. With their pseudo-revolutionary answers, they alleviated this longing for the wholly archaic in the wholly other. Even today, this mission has still not lost its appeal – least of all in certain forgotten sub-cultures previously of left-wing provenance.

In contemporary French philosophy, the German modern masters, Nietzsche and Heidegger, whom André Glucksmann invokes in opposition to Hegel and Marx, tend to spread confusion. But Schmitt is unlikely to exert a similar influence in the Anglo-Saxon world. Outside the highly charged political context of Germany, there seems to me a good chance of a discussion; unhistorical perhaps, but at any rate unbiased, of various suggestive and objectively important ideas. Carl Schmitt's themes can, even today, cause quite a stir.

In 1970 Carl Schmitt returned once more to his *Political Theory* – *Political Theory II*, in order to contribute to two contemporary discussions. "Political theory" had, after all, been taken up again in the 1960s by theologians like Johann Baptist Metz and Jürgen Moltmann, under the influence of Ernst Bloch – that is to say, in a quite different sense of the term. In the meantime, the dogmatic disputations over the post-Conciliar currents of

thought have also conferred new relevance upon the Liberation Theology that is so widespread in Latin America. Parallels with the third and fourth chapters of Schmitt's book of 1922 are obvious – even if their author claimed, half a century later, to have been interested only in the conceptual analogies between theological and juristic dogmatics at the time. In fact, the morphological similarities between conceptual patterns in theology and political philosophy, deduced in the manner of Spengler, had by no means been an end in itself for him. The comparison, for example, between the role of the miracle in theology and that of the "state of emergency" in political philosophy was intended to render his theory of sovereignty multi-dimensional. Schmitt wanted to bring into play the political philosophy of the counter-revolution, with its directly theological motivation; in particular, the doctrines of Donoso Cortés, who disposed of the easy-going legitimism of the July Monarchy after 1848. And to the discursive rule of the liberal middle classes he opposed a dictatorship justified on religious and existential grounds. What does such a theology of the counter-revolution have to do with Liberation Theology? And what is the significance of the fact that today the theses of Cardinal Ratzinger, which surely are better adapted to the setting of a counter-revolutionary theology, can be advanced in the name of a critique of every political theology, almost in the manner of Karl Barth?

This already touches on the second context of discussion in which the political Catholicism of a Carl Schmitt belongs today: the dispute about the legitimacy, or the autonomy, of the modern era. Can the modern mind stabilize itself, secure in the awareness that it can create its normative orientations from its own resources, or must it allow itself, as the insecure product of a corrosive secularizing process, to be revoked after all, submitting once again to the horizons of eschatology and cosmology? In the 1980s a tendency to return to metaphysics is unmistakable. Symptomatic is the evolution of the Catholic philosopher Robert Spaemann, whose starting point was Schmitt's "decisionism" and who has now arrived at Plato. Perhaps it is this reappraisal of tradition in a form that is critical of modernity which explains the interest, curious at first sight, which American followers of Leo Strauss and Michael Oakeshott have in introducing Schmitt's work to the Anglo-Saxon world.

Of further interest in regard to this short work is the relationship of Carl Schmitt to Hugo Ball, that is, to a Dadaist who had returned from the Café Voltaire in Zurich to the bosom of the only path to salvation, the Church. Carl Schmitt's confrontation with political romanticism does indeed conceal the aestheticizing oscillations of his own political thought. In this respect, too, a spiritual kinship with the fascist intelligentsia manifests itself. The last chapter of *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* bears the title: "Irrationalist Theories of the Direct Use of Force". In it Schmitt draws a line from Donoso Cortés through Sorel to Mussolini, and offers the shrewd prognosis that the myth of the general strike will be conquered by the myth of the nation. Above all, though, it is the aesthetics of violence that fascinates him. The interpretation of sovereignty, on the model of creation *ex nihilo*, acquires a halo of surrealistic meanings by reference to the violent destruction of the normative as such. This invites comparison with Georges Bataille's concept of sovereignty, and also explains why Schmitt felt impelled to congratulate the young Walter Benjamin on his essay about Sorel at about this time.

The highly readable introduction by Ellen Kennedy is most informative about the contemporary context of discussion in which *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* appeared. But the substance of the argument of the first two chapters and the preface to the second edition of 1926 can be absorbed even independently of the historical context and used for systematic reflections. To be sure, against an Anglo-Saxon background of an empiricist understanding of the formation of the democratic will of the people, which associates democracy harmlessly with the reconciliation of interests, the rule of the majority and the formation of elites, Carl Schmitt's reflections seem provocative. But one does not need to

adhere, like Schmitt and later Arnold Gehlen, to an institutionalism of Hauriou's type in order to attribute a not inconsiderable significance to the legitimizing power of the understanding that an established praxis has of itself. In this more trivial sense, one can also understand the interest in the intellectual history of the foundations of the parliamentary rule of law. Arguments still flare up about the normative foundations of democracy, because it is not only the stability of an existing praxis which depends upon the way democracy sees itself, but also the criteria for its critical evaluation.

Schmitt admittedly gave an idealist edge to those ideas which, according to his own interpretation, ought to explain parliamentary government, so that they seemed to lose any foundation in reality, at least in the absence of further arguments. The manner in which he undertakes this mockery of parliamentary institutions is as instructive now as ever; not least for those left-wingers in the Federal Republic, and today above all in Italy, who drive out the Devil with Beelzebub by filling the gap left by the non-existent Marxist theory of democracy with Schmitt's fascist critique of democracy.

The medium of discussion that is public and guided by argument, which Schmitt ridicules, is in fact essential for any democratic justification of political authority. Even the majority principle can be interpreted as a procedure which is intended to permit realistic approximations to the idea of building the most rational consensus possible, under the pressures of decision-making. Schmitt turns this into a caricature, in that, already at the level of the theoretical understanding which democracy has of itself, he ignores three things. In the first place, the presuppositions of rationality which the participants in a discursive formation of the popular will are obliged to make *in actu*, are necessary but, on the whole, counter-factual presuppositions. All the same, it is only in the light of such presuppositions of rationality that one can comprehend the function and the significance of parliamentary procedures and conventions at all. Further, practical discourse is concerned with rendering interests more general; consequently, one may not, like Schmitt, set up an antithesis between competition to get the better of the arguments and the rivalry of underlying interests. And finally, it will not do to cut negotiations to obtain compromises out of this model of the public formation of the will of the people altogether. Clearly, the problem of whether compromises can be made under fair conditions can, once again, only be tested through discussion.

The really problematic move which Carl Schmitt makes is, admittedly, the separation of democracy and liberalism. He limits the process of public discussion to the role of parliamentary legislation, and detaches it from the democratic formation of the will of the people in general. As though the theory of liberalism had not always incorporated the conception of a general formation of opinion and popular will into public life anyway! The democratic element allows equal opportunities for all to participate in a process of legitimation, filtered through the medium of public opinion. Schmitt wishes to drive a wedge between democracy, understood as the identity of state and people, and public discussion (which is attributed to liberalism) – for reasons which are transparent enough. He lays down the conceptual ground rules in such a way that he can detach the democratic formation of the will of the people from the universalist presuppositions of general participation, and can limit the former to an ethnically homogeneous substratum of the population, and even reduce it to the acclamation of the politically immature masses, devoid of all argument. Only thus, indeed, can one imagine a Caesarist and racially homogeneous *Führerdemokratie*, a democratic dictatorship, in which something like this "sovereignty" should be embodied. Schmitt thereby provides the outline of democracy, incidentally, which was later incorporated by his colleagues in American exile into their theory of totalitarianism.

Today what Carl Schmitt has to say against the "universal significance of the belief in discussion" is once again relevant. Here his criticisms penetrate to the heart of Western rationalism. That the time is still the same as once it was before, is reason enough to blush and to blanch now all the more.

The flower in the corpse

Michael Hofmann

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At the age of eighteen, Gottfried Benn submitted some poems to a Berlin newspaper, and, as he reminisced in a lecture of 1951, they were returned, marked:

"G.B. – agreeable in feeling, weak in expression. Do try to regain some time." That was a long time ago, and now, you see, after decades of labour, they have included me among the so-called Expressionist poets, while the feeling in my work is generally described as disagreeable.

The period of "agreeable feeling" was short and of little consequence: only a few such poems have survived to be reprinted in Volume Two of the centennial edition of his complete works, which replaces Dieter Wellershoff's four-volume edition of 1961. At the same time, the publishers have also commissioned a biography by Hans Egon Holthusen, a distinguished writer, Germanist and friend of the poet in his later years. The two volumes of Benn's poetry – the first comprising the "collected" poems of 1956, the *Auswahl letzter Hand*, and the second containing published, unpublished and fragmentary work – will be followed, in 1987 and 1988, by the prose in two volumes, and, in 1989, by a final volume containing "dialogische Formen" and a general index.

Benn first made his name in 1912, with the five poems of the cycle "Morgue", written in an hour, published in a week, and notorious ever since for their bleak aestheticism, their macabre juxtapositions, their reduction of human life to a bizarre and pitiful spectacle of no content or significance. Even now – and perhaps for all perpetuity – this is the work for which Benn is best known. Despite the rejection slip cited in the lecture, despite the *trouilles* of Volume Two, Benn's work begins with "Kleine Aster", an envoi to a flower, playfully stitched into a corpse by a medical student (such as Benn himself was):

Trinke dich satt in deiner Vase!
Ruhe sanft,
Kleine Aster!

Drink your bellyful in your vase!
Rest easy,
little aster!
[reviewer's translation]

Under these circumstances, flesh is even less than grass.

In fact, though, the position of "Kleine Aster" is not as unassailable as perhaps it seems. In an appendix, Gerhard Schuster, the editor of this new edition, quotes from the correspondence of 1955 and 1956 between Benn and his publishers, concerning the arrangements for what in the end turned into his collected poems. Both sides were cautious, Benn for instance proposing at one stage that a few "programmatically beautiful" poems be set at the front of the book; "perhaps in a different type-face". This is not cowardice or the wish to deceive (which would be completely out of character), but the understandable anxiety of a man near the end of a lifetime of writing. When the book was published, it was for his seventieth birthday; within a few weeks, it had to stand as his monument. For most of his life, Benn had been, if not reviled, then at least seen as an eccentric or marginal figure. Already in 1913, he had remarked that "art is a matter of some fifty people or so, of whom at least thirty are round the bend". He had had to suppress poems from his "selected" of 1936, and even so found himself the subject of vicious attacks from literary critics among the SS: "It was his last publication for twelve years." "Undesirable then, undesirable again now" – the *Städtische Gedichte* of 1948 had to be published in Switzerland; and an apocryphal selection they were too he complained that the Swiss had

made him look like a "sanfter Heinrich", a "soppy Simon". Now, approaching death and classic status *aequo pede*, Benn's deliberations on his latest self-presentation were conditioned not by self-doubt but by doubt about this newest generation of Germans.

All his life, the noises Benn makes about his poems are modest, sceptical, disparaging. His *Gesammelte Schriften* of 1922 end with an Epilogue that can hardly have been calculated to sell the book to its readers:

So now these collected works are published, one volume, two hundred pages, how paltry, one would have to be ashamed of it if one were still alive. Not a document worth mentioning; I would be amazed if anyone were to read it; I feel quite remote from them, I throw them over my shoulder like Deucalion and his stones; maybe their distortions will turn into human beings, but whatever happens, I don't care for them.

Of his whole career, he says: "At best, you were a character cameo, an eccentric, a specialist – you didn't get any big parts to fill an evening with", and, in the last words of the first volume of his works, he wonders whether "Großartiges und Geschlossenes", anything "magnificent and completed", is feasible in modern times. But the thing about these dismissals is that they are without any real, specific, independent doubt. The nihilism they represent is a constant, even an innate quality. It should not be taken for disavowal, renunciation, "agonizing reappraisal", least of all for any kind of argument with himself. Benn's poetry is not homogeneous, not even consistent, but it is not divided against itself. A Benn poem – whatever direction it goes in – has an air of unanimity. In another late lecture, Benn says: "No question, the modern poem is monological, it is a poem without belief, without hope, it is a poem consisting of words, which you arrange in a fascinating way." However mundane, however approximate, that attribute "fascination" is still the best word for Benn, both his effects and his objectives. He uses it again when he says:

An affinity with words is a primary quality, it can't be learned. You can learn tight-rope walking, funambulism, high-wire acts, walking on nails, but a fascinating way with words, you either have it or you don't.

Benn's severe gloom, his habitual dejection, are, I would say, one aspect of his fascination. It is a mood, a tone, equanimity, indifference, exhaustion, a kind of dandyism, a matter of words, a pretext for vocabulary. It might be noted that not only his clinical medical terms, but also his English and French *Fremdwörter*, many of them used in critical places like endings or titles, almost all convey depression, negation, failure: "apréhude", "à bas", "l'heure bleue", "finish", "Long, long ago". In the letters, there are *Mischwörter*, things like "Downheit" and "ausgepowert", parts of a supralingual language of melancholy. In anyone else, they would signal depression; but in Benn, they are also style and fascination, a style he describes as "Krisenstil, hybrid und final", a crisis-style, hybrid and terminal – one that was, nevertheless, sustained and varied for almost fifty years.

Looking back at "Kleine Aster" and the other poems of 1912, it is hard to see in them the beginning of an *oeuvre*: anywhere for them to go, any way in which they might be expanded, any sense of unfulfilled potential. There is in them a scientific awareness of the destructibility of matter, of the whole of a life being the merest part of a mute cycle: "earth calls" from around a hospital deathbed, a gold tooth is taken from a corpse by a morgue attendant, and buys an evening in a dance-hall. Given a synoptic nihilism like this, where is there to go? What mysteries? "Morgue II", quite properly dropped by Benn (and therefore now in Volume Two), is a rather routine variorum of prankish rearrangements of corpses. There is a brief spell of interest in the other parts of the cycle, in the dance-hall; a move from operating tables to café tables, from the death industry backwards (or forwards) to the pleasure industry of "Nachtcafé", "Englisches Café", "Kurkonzert"; morbidity reappears briefly as *morbidezza*:

Eine entleert ihr Hände.
Die sind weich, weiß, groß.
Wird aus Fleisch von einem Schöb.
("Dinner")

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One strips off her hands.
They're soft, white, large.
As though made of flesh from her belly.
But the implantation of the aster also anticipates a more durable and substantial theme. In the 1913 poem "Untergrundbahn" (Holthausen comments usefully on the distracting irrelevance of some of Bann's early titles), there are the lines (in Michael Hamburger's translation):

Ein armer Hirnhund, schwer mit Gott behangen.
Ich bin der Stern so satt. Oh, ein Gerüste
von Blütenkolben löste sanft sie ab
und schwellte mit und schnürte und trüfte.

A wretched braindog, laden down with God.
My forehead wears me. Oh that a frame
of clustered blooms would gently take its place,
to swell in union and stream and sludder.

Those longing subjunctives are echoed in the name of the hero of Bann's 1916 prose-pieces *Gehirne* (Brains): Werff Rönne, an imperative followed by a subjunctive, urging dissolution, the melt-down of consciousness. For the next period, the brain and consciousness (that "sentry between blood and claw" of "Icarus") will be Bann's enemy: opening out into expressionistic travel-posters, hymns to pre-consciousness and community, to the dionysiac realms of the Mediterranean; poems evoking the quaternary decline of the human race, poems to oblivion and pure form.

Form, for most of the 1920s, was synonymy with the eight-line stanza: a Mediterranean shape, but with primitive heaviness and lassitude in the rhymes, sentences yoked together by commas, short, noun-heavy lines, almost syntactical, with caesuras of staggering indifference. Again, not arguing a case – there are no verbs to do it with – but throwing out noun-projects, gnostic shards, *Stichwörter*, in a frenetic chant. Tone is almost indescribable, there are too many possibilities: Spenglerian gloom, cultural cynicism, melancholy sonorities in "a" and "au", but all of it quite hypnotic in effect. The critic Max Rychner de-

scribes it: "Every word an allusion, making the strings vibrate in a precisely calculated rhythmic curve, no depiction, nothing *in extenso*, written for cognoscenti, for whom each word has its own nimbus." One of the most excessive poems of the time – though not in octaves – is "Prolog 1920":

Individual-Ich: abgeakelt,
Psychologie: zum Kotzen.
Entwicklungsprinzip: der Hand bleibt am Ofen,
Kausalgenese: wer will das wissen.
Ergebnis: réponse payéell

Individual ego: washed up,
psychology: makes you puke,
development principle: sleeping dogs,
aetiology: who cares,
sum total: réponse payéell

The lines systematically, economically and ferociously take apart contemporary intellectual structures, not by argument, but by energetic branding and labelling. What is propounded instead is a kind of fluid, dissociated, primordial existence: "Totalisation", "Orphische Zellen", "thalassale Regression", "trunken zerebral", is how the famous catch-phrases and slogan-words go. One is reminded of Bann's own crisis as a psychiatrist – a modern collapse as crucial as that of Hofmannsthal's Lord Chundus – when he lost all interest in individual cases. His character Rönne is called "Flagellant der Einzeldinge", "the flagellant of individual phenomena". In his letters, Bann discusses his "aversion to impressions", he refuses Frau Hindemith's offer of an outing, saying he found nature "exaggerated", and sunshine "tiring", he is offended, injured almost, when another friend springs a social evening on him.

The emphases shifted with the years, became less exotic, less dionysiac, more melancholic; there is more solitude, more of the redemption of pure form, the "hour" of creation, and stress on spiritual distinction. Where the solution, or anyway the yearning, had been for luxuriance, pre- or post-consciousness, polysyllables and place-names, it was now trans-

formed into something more stoical, austere and simple:

es gibt nur zwei Dinge: die Leere
und das gezeichnete Ich. ("Nur Zwei Dinge", 1953)
This pairing, "emptiness and the marked self", is Bann's subject in the poems of his last decade. The titles of his books of the 1950s tell their own story: *Fragmente*, *Destillationen*, *Après-midi*. These poems are his most moving; they have a Chinese asceticism and sorrow; they use the music of simple words, in basic quatrains; they arise from the daily conditions of Bann's life, a walk, an evening in a bar, a gift of flowers, a book he has been reading. Some others are in free form, so-called *Sprechgedichte*, the poet musing aloud, his own thoughts, or on lives that interest him: La Duse, Chopin, Clemenceau, Rembrandt (in Hamburger's translation):

Ah – Hultskamp –
Wärmezentrum,
Farbenmittelpunkt –
mein Schattenbraun –
Barstorpfeilidium um Herz und Auge –

Ah – Hultskamp –
midpoint of warmth,
centre of colours,
my shadow brown –
aura of unshaved bristle round heart and eye –

Sometimes their Anglo-Saxon flatness is such that many English poems in the same genre look positively vibrant by comparison, late Lowell, say, or Larkin. Occasionally, they muster a little indignant humour, the last vestiges of decades of rage and denial: "Kleiner Kulturspiegel" or "Radio" for instance, both in Volume Two, along with many other of the late poems. In general, though, they show an old man, dignified, sonorous, surrounded by impenetrable griefs: he is quoted in the Notes, saying "The intellect always has the departed in its train, the intellect must remain cold, otherwise it would become familiar." That never befell Bann.

What seems to me more suggestive of Bann's nature and purpose than anything else, and more transportable, are two idyllic periods in his life, one in each of the two world wars. He has written, imitatively, about both:

What I produced in the way of literature, apart from "Morgue", which appeared with A. R. Meyer in 1912, I wrote in the spring of 1916 in Brussels. I was a doctor in a hospital for prostitutes, lived in a confiscated house, eleven rooms, just me and my orderly, few duties, allowed to wear civvies, had no responsibilities, no ties, barely understood the language; I walked the streets, strange faces; a peculiar spring, three months, quite unique, what if not a day passed without the shelling at the Yser, life swung in an orbit of silence and forlornness. I lived on the margins where existence dies and the self begins. I often think back on those weeks: they were life, they'll not return, everything else was trash.

The second passage, less dense, more descriptive, more soberly written, comes from a prose piece called "Block II, Room 66", the address of Bann and his second wife for a year towards the end of the Second World War (translated by E. B. Ashton):

Nothing dreamier than barracks! Room 66 faces the drill ground; before it grow three small rowan trees, their berries without purple, the leaves as though stained from brown tears. It is late August; the swallows still fly, but already are massed for the great passage. A battalion band rehearses in a corner, the sun sparkling on trumpets and percussives as they play, "Die Himmel rühmen", and "Ich schiesse den Hirsch im wilden Forst." It is the fifth year of war, and here is a completely secluded world, a kind of beginning. The shouts of command are external; inwardly all things are muffled and still.

Both passages describe peace-in-war, a behind-the-lines existence that seems positively idyllic: "they were life", and "a kind of beginning". But there is more to them than Bann's good fortune in finding himself out of the way; or confirmation of his provocative witicism that the army (which he rejoined in 1935) was "the aristocratic form of emigration". They show him thriving in anomalous, withdrawn, insensitive, somehow inexpressive (as opposed to Berlin, where he lived, practised and wrote) locations. In each case, he was provided with a little work – in Landsberg, he was busy with statistics on suicides in the army – but this too seemed bizarre, decorative, and left him, at liberty. Uprooted, he flourished. Perhaps the

in its hierarchical, gleaming structure, he was more blissfully private and opaque than ever, truly at home, masked by a spurious (albeit real) function, furtive and productive. Somehow, both situations were turned by him into intensifications of his life in Berlin, instead of its opposite: small ground-floor flat, small practice (skin and venerical specialist), humble view on a yard full of washing, and even a few chickens (not his own) pecking about in it. Occasional cut flowers. Rare visitors (and only if announced previously). The two situations seem to me endlessly suggestive of Bann: the massive military carapace, well run, imposing, neglected, and behind it, Valéry's poet in a lab-coat, in and out of uniform, the only intelligent life, attending to the leaves on rowan trees.

In his – to my mind, outstanding – monograph on Bann, Walter Lennig (like Holthausen, a former associate of the poet) writes of his life so bizarrely straightforward and without incident that the lives of Rilke and George look positively sensational by comparison. In the 1920 Expressionist anthology, *Menschheitsdämmerung*, Bann's note on himself runs as follows: "Born 1886 and grew up in villages in the province of Brandenburg. Past life unimportant, unimportant existence as doctor in Berlin." It takes either courage or exasperation or both to begin a biography on this footing, as Holthausen does. It is an admission, straight away, that he will not be able to count on the co-operation, even the interest, or the sympathy, of his subject.

Bann's recalcitrance, his stern posthumous resistance, is impressive and awkward: Holthausen is generous in documenting it. A biography of Bann, he says, "has to be written against the grain", against the anti-biographical, anti-narrative course of Bann's thinking. It has to put up with the subject's jeering too: "Herkunft, Lebenslauf – Unsinn!", "Background, C.V. – rubbish!" and more sophisticated jokes like this: "Most of them come from Jüterbog or Königsberg, and they usually wind up in some Black Forest or other." Where there is evidence from Bann, this itself becomes a problem: who would care to hear another version, let alone an independent one, after hearing from Bann himself? When Bann writes "went to America, vaccinated the steers", what else is there to say? The biographer is up against a man whose aesthetic is "Ausdruck und Stoffvernichtung", "expression and the destruction of subject-matter".

Holthausen is unable, or more likely unwilling, to impose a proper biography-style narrative pattern on his subject. What *Goethe's Bann: Leben Werk Widerspruch 1886-1972* pursues is not the regular melancholy imperceptible chronological flow of a biography, but a series of tangents, local expansions of date of birth, ancestry, social character of German pastors (Bann came from a long line of them: Holthausen himself is a *Pasorenshof*), school, university in Marburg, science and medicine at the turn of the century, Expressionism and avant-garde art, Rönne and Brussels, the case of the British spy Edith Cavell (Bann was the doctor present at her shooting), the publication of the *Gesammelte Schriften* and the death of Bann's first wife. The information is given clearly, not always in close formation, and always in order, but the approach is congenial to Holthausen, who quotes generously from various sources, evaluating the evidence, and sends detail skittering after detail. In the only really absurd example of this last trait, a discussion of 1920s Berlin produces the name and dates of Christopher Isherwood, the date of his novel *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939) and the date of the American film *Cabaret* (1972), "starring Liza Minnelli". But this is only to cavil at the misapplication of learning that, for most of the book, is left at the service of its subject. Holthausen's literary judgments, delivered sometimes in a swinging, Bannian style, are mostly very acute: as when he describes Bann's language on family matters as "Boskelheit", "for mulale", or finds a piece on Bann's childhood "both laconic and rhapsodic – he *lymns* his childhood in prose". If there is any serious criticism of the book, it is that Holthausen never really opposes any tendency of his own to those of Bann; it remains less a biography than an annotated anthology. But it is still a work that, once completed, will surely be detailed, sympathetic and precise.

The vegetable Paradiso

Lorna Sage

ITALO CALVINO
Sotto il sole giaguaro
93pp. Milan: Garzanti. L. 15,000.

Mr Palomar, the last of Italo Calvino's books to appear before he died, was about a looker-on, all eye. The posthumously published *Sotto il sole giaguaro* would have given each sense its own story, and would have been called "I cinque sensi", except that this time he really did leave something unfinished, a fitting footnote to a writing life devoted to the study of beginnings and the cunning postponement of endings. As it is, we have three pieces out of the intended five, each secreting its own diversionary sub-plots: first "Il nome, il naso", snuffling enjoyably back and forth through cultural history on the track of a smell (or rather, Smell) from demi-monde to jungle to the new jungle of groups and groupies; then the title story, about Mexican menus (parodic shades of Lawrence's "Woman who Rode Away"); and "Un re in ascolto", an inverted fairy tale about the kingdom of the inner ear, its king imprisoned in a whispering labyrinth. They are by way of being "exercises", as Giorgio Manicelli points out on the dust-jacket – studies in displacement, the body in words.

The title story once upon a time had another title, "Sapore Sapere", playing on the link between taste and knowledge. It's a theme Calvino touched on in his last tribute to Barthes, whom he praised for inventing (or making it seem possible to invent) a methodology that didn't lose touch with the "living and mortal" subject. *Sotto il sole giaguaro* looks this rather daunting project straight in the teeth – if taste is knowledge, then to eat is to know. The narrator and his wife Olivia, tourists in Mexico, have worked out a gourmet theory of travel:

the true journey . . . implies a complete change of diet, swallowing whole the country you're visiting, its flora and fauna and culture . . . passing through your lips and your oesophagus . . .

The comic Inferno

Eric Korn

STEFANO BENNI
Terral: Life after World War III
Translated by Annapaola Cancogni
360pp. Pluto. £9.95.
0745300871

Science fiction is the most conservative of genres, but only the subscribers know this and they won't let on. (There are, after all, only a limited number of predictable futures – and the future which will become actual is not among them.) Consequently when a non-sf publisher declares that a book is science fiction "like no other", the reader does, unfortunately, know what to expect. Neither the attitude nor the plot nor the style of *Terral* is as original as the author (a political journalist in Bologna) and publisher suggest. The stance is anarchical-cynical-farical-satirical; the category is the comic Inferno; and the carefully engineered shock dénouement is an example of a well-established genre that I will sportingly not name (though Burgess and Borges have contributed to it).

Stefano Benni's method is excess, an imagination untrammelled by taste or astro-physics. I've seen many wonderful things: Diurnus, the flower planet whose petals close at dusk, and Pollux, the heavenly hitchhiker that likes to cling to the orbit of larger planets . . . I've seen the pterodactyls of Transpluto mate in forty different ways and I've captured and caught four small rainbows from Translunum. I've drunk the four-flavoured clouds of the sky of Frankio and smoked the grass of the satellite Aphodites with twelve penguins – at least, that's what I remembered afterwards. The year is 2157. On a hot August night a century earlier, the Third World War was begun (by mice in the missile silos) and ended. It was followed closely by WW IV, WW V and WW VI. Despite exterminations, nuclear winter, mutation and energy-depletion, space exploration flourishes. So do robotic technology, computer interference, espionage (all

Eating is all: their sexual life is conducted across the table, their excursions into the ruined temples suggest taboo questions about cookery – what happened, wonders Olivia (licking her lips), to the human sacrifices . . . ? Does the taste for chili not perhaps recall a time when spices were used to conceal an unspeakable taste for "the food of the gods"? The narrator finds himself watching her mouth at work ("her tongue pressing me against her palate, cocooning me in saliva, then easing me under the points of her canines"), and only rescues himself from the heart of darkness inside by the kind of conjuring trick possible to narrators. He remembers the magic of words. Eating is not a case of "Olivia – food – me" but of "Olivia – food – names – me": "It was the name 'gorditas pellizcadas con meneca' that I was savouring above all . . ." And so he has his Mexico and eats it. The trick is to remember, as Calvino the essayist puts it elsewhere, that language, once it exists, pre-empt the inarticulate gods and their rituals. You can eat without being eaten – if you're content to eat words.

Or at least, that's one (optimistic) version, which transforms Olivia back into the partner in a dialogue, the familiar provocative Muse/Reader (compare Ludmilla in *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*) whose demands for ever spicier and more elaborate recipes keep the writer alive. When Olivia says "I'd like to eat *chiles en nogado*" the ink starts to flow, he and she are members one of another, part of "the universal cannibalism that . . . cancels the boundaries between our bodies and the *sopa de friegoles* . . . the *enchiladas* . . ." It's a very funny story, not least because that carnivorous jaguar sun invoked in the title courts comparison with alternative Mexicos (like Lawrence's) that lurk darkly in the background, trying to confuse ink with blood. Calvino's favourite analogies in this line were always, anyway, vegetable or mineral. He has a splendid phrase about the "perpetuité del vegetale", and it's a sap or chlorophyll that one imagines running through the veins of his branching stories, at least from the "family trees" of the *Our Ancestors* trilogy in the 1950s on. It was there (and in the eye-witness accounts of cosmic origins in *Cosmocomics* and *Ti-Zero*) that he staked out his territory as a specialist in beginnings and fictional foreplay, his brand of vegetable love (vaster than empires and more slow) – replacing, as he pointed out, an early "neo-realist" flirtation with Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. He convicts his youthful self, not of being second-hand and literary, but of not being literary enough: "I conjured up", (he wrote in the preface to *Ancestors*) "the book I myself would have liked to read, the sort by an unknown writer, from another age and another country, discovered in an attic." The result, of course, was (*pace* Barthes, or at least the Barthes of that era) a newly "readable" kind of book, the romance of reading – familiar now, though it is worth recalling the euphoria of his *Baron in the Trees* all those years ago, finding his feet above the ground:

The holm oak was near an elm: their two crests almost touched . . . From the elm, by a branch elbow-to-elbow with the next tree, he passed on to a carob, and then to a mulberry tree. So I saw Cosimo swing from one branch to another, high above the garden.

This moment is echoed here in the ripe jungle episodes on the sense of smell – and both (on the book-from-the-attic principle) echo Edgar Rice Burroughs's Tarzan who, one recalls, learned to write and read before he could speak. And as always the writer's progress from branch to branch depends with a comic and vertiginous frankness on collusion with the reader. "Il nome, il naso" is about following a woman's special scent, which is (perhaps) the smell of her mortality: to be unique is to be singular and irreplaceable, hence the pleasure (and the pathos) of stories in the plural, the ramifications of narrative. (One point about the vegetable analogy is that it's a modest myth

about immortality – or perhaps better, continuity – that knows its limits.) The "Re in ascolto" locates at last a city and a landscape in the whorls of his own ear – but only (again) by following the tenuous thread of a voice from outside. The reader (whether or not "in" the story) is the necessary conspirator, held at the intimate distance that keeps the stories coming (another analogy here is cat's cradle):

"The novel I would most like to read at this moment," Ludmilla explains, "should have as its driving force only the desire to narrate, to pile stories upon stories, without trying to force a philosophy of life on you, simply allowing you to observe its own growth, like a tree, an entangling, as if of branches and leaves . . ."

Now that the *oeuvre* is complete (or rather, permanently incomplete), the extent of the confidence trick becomes perhaps clearer: Calvino's Reader – so eloquent, so exigent, so endlessly, suggestively unsatisfied – was his greatest, most irreplaceable invention, his most irresistible flattery to mere actual readers, and may not outlive him. He has joined the ancestors, fixed now on his branch of the family tree, and as he reflected, in one of the Mexican pieces that belong with "Il sole giaguaro" (reprinted in *Collezione di sabbia*, TLS, July 12, 1985) family trees in general have an increasingly ominous way of burgeoning backwards:

Contemporary anthropology looks for roots further and further back, millions of years away, scattered across continents. (What seems to draw nearer is the end, the lopping of all the branches one by one or all at once, the threat of a demographic or technological catastrophe, of starvation . . .)

Narrowing the analogy inexcusably to literary life, one could say that Calvino's improbable achievement was to fill the last parenthesis with new stories, stories within stories, new ways into the woods.

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LES LIVRES DES PUF QUESTIONNENT LE MONDE

Cursed and loving

Galen Strawson

PAUL BAILEY
Gabriel's Lament
331pp. Cape. £9.95.
0234 028235

Gabriel Harvey is a man alone in a room in a fine house in Chiswick. He is writing a lament, writing down his life in order to be able to understand it – or simply stand it. He uses all his wit and clarity, and having a great deal of both, he succeeds as well as anyone could. The by-product of his solitary therapy is an impressive if overlong novel, a book freighted with suppressed emotional intensity. It is a record of suffering, suffering at first concealed for three decades; then engulfed in a greater grief; and finally calmed in the backlash of moral reversal.

Gabriel's Lament is a study in deferred mortification. At bottom it is a tale of two snobs and their victim. But there is a great deal not to say about it in a review, since it depends for its final effect on the misapprehensions it creates. It begins in 1949, when Gabriel Harvey is twelve, living in London in a tiny rented terrace house south of the river. His mother Amy is thirty-one, his affectionate, cantankerous father, Oswald, sixty-six. Amy works to support them. Oswald curses and pontificates, and holds court in *The Prodigal's Return*.

And then everything changes. Oswald inherits a lot of money from a baronet he once served. (Why? One's suspicions are finally confirmed.) He buys a villa in Clapham. His wife must no longer work. And she must have a kitchen – that Escottier himself would be proud of. His son, a charity boy, must now pay the fees at school. And he himself must substitute whisky for beer, "lunch" for "dinner", and wear a bright new tweed suit.

Amy hates this change. (Why does she hate it so much? One finds out only at the end.) She says that Escottier is welcome to the kitchen, and feels she is losing touch with her old husband. And so she leaves for a short holiday, which she prolongs – and then prolongs. She cleans behind Gabriel's ears, dispatches him briskly to school on February 1, 1950, and he never sees her again.

Gabriel is confident. She will certainly come home for his birthday in March; or at least for her own. He waits in his love and in his hope, in the beginnings of his new religious faith – that one day she will come. Meanwhile anxiety goes to work in one of its favourite locations. He starts wetting his bed. He becomes young "Piss-a-Bed", goaded by his increasingly irritable father, humiliated by a rubber sheet. His outstanding schoolwork goes to pieces. That summer he defecates in his bed, and smears himself from head to foot.

Five years later he finally leaves home; he escapes his father at the age of seventeen, working first as a letter-sorter at Mount Pleasant, then for nine years as a factotum skivvy in the Jerusalem, a home for the elderly and dying (the Jerusalem to which Paul Bailey devoted a whole short novel in 1967), then in an ironmonger's shop. He is a small and very "pretty" man with a passion for music. At twenty-seven he has no need to shave. He has no sexual life. He buys a Moynashel frock like his mother's, and wears it in her memory on her birthdays, sitting in perfect quiet, alone in his room. A religion needs rites; he is sure he will see her again. His creed is short: HIMVB9719 – the number on a record she used to play. Heddle Nash singing an aria from Handel's *Polyem*.

In his spare time he writes a book called *Lords of Light* about a series of preachers, mostly itinerant, some charlatans, some sincere, some mad, some inspired. After twenty rejections, an obscure publisher takes it on. Hollywood turns part of it into a highly successful item of inspirational schlock called *Nersey Messiah*, and Gabriel ends up well off.

That's the shilling life – and a bit more. What it leaves out is most of the book: the people Gabriel meets as he moves to the lonely, crowded margin of 1950s and 1960s London, and becomes another eccentric human detail in a squalid boarding-house room, suffering the past that curls back in his parents' phrases. There is Mrs Sparey, his first landlady, widow of a revolutionary killed in Spain; the White

Russian Countess Bolina, another of Mrs Sparey's lodgers; the Goan atheist Mr Nazareth, another; and wise Harold Mude at the Mount Pleasant sorting office.

Then there are Oswald's various housekeepers; Marge and Reggie, Oswald's ghoulish friends; a derelict old-Etonian barrister reduced to British wine on a park bench; Auntie Kathleen, Gabriel's wonderful Swedenborgian aunt; the acerbic old ladies at the Jerusalem; and some hair-raising Minnesotans. As Gabriel says, he keeps the company of talkers, porpoises in language. Bailey's ear is very good and is matched by his invention. He captures and creates a remarkable spectrum of idiolects, each with its own quirks and lapses, its own delicacies and metaphorical predilections, its own pattern of directness and indirectness and special modes of humour.

There is perhaps too much of this (the short story occupying pp 222-239 could be dropped from the novel without loss); there are moments when *Gabriel's Lament* risks becoming a kind of Emporium of Characters, a container for set pieces. And Bailey's characters are sometimes too informally unhesitating in their speech, too similar in their graphic aplomb, too precise to be wholly believable. But this is a very modest use of poetic licence; a fading vernacular of such richness deserves a dramatic record of this sort, so vivid with humour and charm in the grip of reality.

The biggest talker of them all is Gabriel's father, whom Gabriel continues to see only because it was his Swedenborgian aunt's last wish. Oswald is condemned to repartee, unable not to speak, a chippy British pub philosopher given to rumbustious tmesis with a single inflex ("inbloodysalable", "unbloody-salable", "rehabloodysalable"). The inmost process of his thought is set in the track of cliché – "Ours not to reason, etc". Relentlessly aggressive and didactic, he persecutes his son – that "cursed oaf" – with words.

And yet he mixes his streaming linguistic vulgarity and torrents of universal racial prejudice (Scots excepted) with unmistakable evidence of finer feeling and discernment; with witty, pungent images and a grandiose roaring coarseness that has nothing to do with vulgarity. And this terrible, grousing, strutting, "cunt-struck" (his phrase) old man almost invariably inspires affection, even in those he most disparages.

He keeps it up until he is ninety-four and legless. And when he dies he leaves his son a box. And in the box Gabriel finds the multiplication of his suffering, a motive for suicide, and the first chance of emotional progress that he has had for thirty years. There is a time when he hates his father, and a time when he hates his mother. But most of the emotion in families is just intensity of feeling before it is anything else, intensity which shifts from light to dark without fixing finally in love or hate. And when both his parents are dead and known to be so, when the scales have settled in the slow balance of time, Gabriel finds that he still loves them both – as he did at the beginning, in the tiny terraced house south of the river.

Make mine a single

Christopher Hawtree

JULIAN GLOAG
Only Yesterday
170pp. Hamish Hamilton. £9.95.
0241 119235

Consisting almost entirely of conversation, *Only Yesterday* would have an illustrator hard-pressed to come up with enough pictures which did not involve another walk to the drinks cabinet owned by Oliver Darley, a retired architect, and his wife, May, residents of East Sheen (or, according to the blurb, Richmond). On page after page he would find only more discussion about arthritis and the feasibility of installing either a downstairs lavatory or a stair-lift. By way of variation we have a visit to a pub – "I made them triples, I hope you don't mind – it saves having to barge through the crowd all the time. Cheers!" a sordid bed-sit – "In the freezer? God, you're mad as well as disgusting. Frozen baked beans" – and some

The non-history man

David Montrose

DAVID CAUTE
News from Nowhere
403pp. Hamish Hamilton. £10.95.
0241 119200

News from Nowhere ranges over fifteen years and many miles in chronicling the personal and political turmoils of Richard Stern, Marxist philosopher. At the outset – 1967 – there is more than a touch of Malcolm Bradbury's Howard Kirk about him. Arrogant, opportunistic, he swiftly develops from a young lecturer revered by protesting LSE students into the darling of the New Left, boasting an international reputation. Within a few speedily-recounted years, though, Stern more closely resembles Steven Bright, the academic victim-hero of Caute's earlier novel, *The Occupation*. Estranged from his beautiful new wife, Elizabeth, whose energies are chiefly devoted to militant feminism and wholesale adultery, infatuated with Esther Meyer, a white Rhodesian visiting Britain to campaign for majority rule in her country, he neglects himself and his work. Finally dismissed from the LSE, Stern hits the bottle, but rescue arrives when Esther wangles him a journalistic assignment: covering the Rhodesia Conference at Geneva in 1976. When she returns home to engage actively in the guerrilla struggle – joining her husband, a member of Zanu's central committee – he takes off in pursuit.

As the stringer for a right-wing newspaper, Stern sees half his reports, which regularly contradict the leader column, spiked. Thirty months pass before he catches up with Esther: both are promptly captured when the Security Forces raid a guerrilla encampment. After two months in Chikurubi prison, Stern returns to Britain, experiencing more lean times, more battles with his wife and her "coven". He becomes estranged from Esther, too, after he publishes attacks on her husband, who is now Zimbabwe's Minister of the Interior: "His main job is detaining political opponents under Ian Smith's Emergency Powers. If anyone he doesn't like should happen to be acquitted in court, Zimunya's police immediately re-arrest

them on the court-house steps." The novel ends with him about to depart for Beirut. For all this ambitiousness of scale and subject, *News from Nowhere* comes across as soap opera. The milieux all have a veneer of glamour: Stern's early activism, for example, involves hobnobbing with the likes of Russell and Sartre, Cohn-Bendit and Dutschke, receiving "invitations to lecture from Copenhagen to Montreal". Manoeuvres and betrayals occur in such *Dallasy*-like profusion that one loses count of the knives sinking into backs, the punches thudding home below belts. Above all, Stern is largely surrounded by stereotypes. Elizabeth ("All personal relationships are political. They're about power") out-bitches Alexis Colby, while her sidekick, Hattie, represents the acme of man-hating extremism; Stern has an eccentric Jewish mother and, above him, a boozy, hard-boiled foreign editor (whom Caute vainly attempts to round out by the introduction of a secret woman). Esther is woefully insubstantial. Even Stern himself never quite achieves solidity, least of all when succumbing to his grand passion.

On the credit side, Caute tellingly portrays the attitudes of Rhodesia's white diaphanous, who hold, without a trace of self-doubt, that ideal society is being sold out by a contemptible, no-longer-great Britain enfeebled by the Welfare State. Better still are the passages which satirize (with something of the spirit Orwell brought to his animadversions on craft socialists) the political modishness, double standards, line-toeing, priggishness and general shabby behaviour which Stern comes up against (often perpetrated by his comrades on the left). A closing twist, however, undermines the pointedness. Ostensibly, the novel comprises an omniscient narration interspersed with extracts from Stern's notebooks, but, from an epilogue contributed by another character, we learn that both elements are the work of Stern, who is on record as favouring "new historical narrative", one ignoring "the stale, tired distinction between fiction and 'non-fiction'." The justice of the satire – indeed, the "factuality" of the whole book – immediately becomes suspect. Is it, after all, simply a case of rewriting as the best revenge?

Tales of the routine-ridden

Patricia Craig

SAM KEERY
The Streets of Laredo
175pp. Cape. £9.95.
0234 02373X

There are twenty-two stories in this collection by Sam Keery, some very short, all briskly written, and all affording glimpses into somewhat unsatisfactory and routine-ridden lives – the lives, it may be, of office workers, the occupants of bed-sitting rooms, or those with ambitions unlikely to be achieved. There's an

tentative doodling of a pyramid.

Only Yesterday, as a television play, might have been a pleasant way of passing a late Sunday evening, feet up, glass (triple) of malt strategically placed. Stretched out on the page, this drama of a weekend's coincidental visit from the Darleys' about-to-be-divorced son, Rupert (medical student turned *Punch* columnist), and his daughter (medical student) merely rambles on, making one wish that Julian Gloag had done more than "novelize". Such devices as an ambulance-driving boyfriend's being on strike (able to provide a lift down) and Oliver's plans for a posthumous folly ("he designed the municipal lavatories, you know") demand to be made a real part of the novel, and Gloag has capably assimilated more extraordinary events in his fiction before now. As it is, they appear as bizarre appendages of a chat to which one half-listens, agreeing at the right moments while all the time astonished that the publisher should have thought "alright" all right not once but on forty-one occasions.

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increasing note of exuberance in the stories: we start with a rather staid and elderly clerk (the odd foible or two aside), and end with two young men in a second-floor double, daunted by a scarcity of shillings for the gas meter.

Keery shows himself, here, to be an economical writer with a flair for suggesting an atmospheric atmosphere – that of a conference of insurance agents, for example, or a London of anti-Nuclear activity, and the fostering of folk-singing in basement coffee bars. The era is set in the 1950s; the Suez crisis and the gap for Marxism among the upper classes get a showing in one or two of the pieces. Elsewhere we have some sources of humiliation for its offensive characters, like the boy who fails to come up to scratch when he finds himself with a girl under a pile of coats in the aftermath of a party, some larking about and some innocent posturing – there's a back-street boy from Belfast, for instance, whose efforts to acquire a bit of class are amiably recounted.

We also find a postscript to *The Last Republican Out of Belfast*, Sam Keery's novel, published in 1984, which ended with his hero Joe McCabe about to light out for Australia: "The Emigrant" Joe has reached Adelaide and a mining encampment, and noted, with some dismay, the flatness of the Australian landscape in contrast to the hills surrounding Belfast. Exiles and their importations loom large in these stories, importations like "The Streets of Laredo", a song which started life as "The Bard of Armagh", before being transported by Irish immigrants to the American West, and gaining new words to suit the setting.

Keery's stories, on the whole, are less lyrical and evocative than his novel, which delineated with great charm a Belfast/Lisburn upbringing, but they contain a good deal of savour, including some tongue-in-cheek echoes of *Dubliners* (one story is called "Remembrance Day on My Ward") and much sharpness of observation.

The Raphael of the Counter-Reformation

Nicholas Penny

ANDREA EMILIANI
Federico Barocci (Urbino 1535-1612)
Two volumes, 464pp. Bologna: Nuova Alfa.
L120,000 each.

When, in 1586, Federico Barocci's painting of the Visitation was unveiled in Rome, queues of admirers were seen for several days in the Chiesa Nuova, the Church of the Oratorians, where it served as an altarpiece. The founder of the Oratory, Saint Filippo Neri himself, often sat "on a little chair" lost in the "sweetest transports" in front of this tender, solemn, intimate feminine encounter – until he was irritated by the discovery that he had in turn become a holy picture and was exciting the ecstatic admiration of female spies in an adjacent chapel.

By the early years of the new century the Pope, Clement VIII, had contrived a more private way of enjoying Barocci's art. The Duke of Urbino had presented him with a gold Holy Water vessel to which was attached a miniature painting by Barocci of the infant Christ, seated upon the clouds, raising his hand to bless. The Pope had this picked off the vessel and stuck on his breviary so that he could delight in it every day at his devotions. (The painting is now known only from a replica in Glasgow which it is surprising to find omitted from the two volumes under review.)

Barocci was nearly seventy by this time and notoriously sickly, dilatory and easily offended, but no artist in Italy enjoyed a higher reputation. Another altarpiece by him, "The Presentation of the Virgin", was unveiled in the Chiesa Nuova in the spring of 1603 – "on Sunday, with incredible applause, and satisfaction, the marvellous picture by Barocci was beheld, not only by us, but by all Rome, above the altar of your eminence", the patron, the Bishop of Todi, was informed. A few months later the Pope had decided that the most important new altarpiece in the city – for his new family burial chapel in Santa Maria Sopra Minerva – should also be painted by the old man in Urbino.

Barocci is the only great Italian artist to have practised in a relatively provincial centre for most of his working life and long after he had achieved international fame. This may be explained by his persistent illness, first experienced in his youth in Rome after eating a salad poisoned (it was said) by his rivals. Illness may have encouraged the meticulous planning and slow evolution of his work and then, later, it certainly helped to stop the complaining of patrons. Distance also had its advantages if one wished to ignore their importunities. Barocci was, in addition, fortunate in old age to enjoy the special protection of his sovereign, the Duke of Urbino, Francesco Maria II della Rovere.

Although some of his paintings were sent, at the Duke's behest, to the courts of Prague and Madrid, most of the artist's work was painted for Italy and has stayed there. This is one reason why his name is so little known in Britain. There are only two paintings by him in British public collections – the "Holy Family with the Cat" (in the National Gallery), and the chiaroscuro sketch for the "Madonna of the Rosary" (in the Ashmolean Museum). The former is one of the artist's most saccharine works – the latter, although perhaps the most beautiful painting in Oxford, is relatively small and uncoloured and so attracts less notice than it deserves. In both places Barocci is displayed among artists of the mid-seventeenth century. In the clumsy categories of contemporary art history he is neither "Renaissance" nor "Mannerist", but "Proto-Baroque".

Barocci painted one profane narrative, "The Flight of Aeneas from Troy", the original of which (last recorded in this country in 1800) was commissioned as a present from the Duke of Urbino to the Emperor Rudolf II. The subject was a compromise between the devotional ones which the Duke and Barocci preferred and the "fascivious" ones which the Emperor so liked. Barocci also painted portraits, and a still-life attributed to him is included by Andrea Emiliani in this book. But the majority of his work was religious; and this does not help his reputation in Britain, for among the millions who love Constable and the Impression-

ists, and even among the thousands who love Giotto and Piero della Francesca, a Protestant revulsion persists against swooning nuns, ecstatic martyrs, smiling angels, melting outlines, exhilarating foreshortening, compositional disequilibrium – against the "correggibilità" (as it was once called) of what has been loosely thought of as "Counter-Reformation taste".

What appealed to Filippo Neri, to Pope Clement VIII, and many others was Barocci's successful adaptation for devotional purposes of the domestic sentiment and tender sensuality which Correggio had given to Cupid as well as to Christ. Or so we would guess. Counter-Reformation churchmen writing on art were chiefly concerned with didactic clarity, with decorum – and with discouraging artistic licence. Barocci's painting may have been deeply satisfactory to them, but, interestingly, he seems to have been given astonishing freedom and even invented an entirely new type of altarpiece largely on his own initiative.

The Pope wanted the altarpiece in his family chapel to depict the Last Supper. The subject was customarily treated in a conventional horizontal format (suitable for the end wall of a refectory) and there was no room for this in the chapel. But Clement persisted in the idea, although he added that if Barocci felt that he could not achieve it then he would be content "with a St Clement, and a St Hippolytus dragged by the horses, these being his patron saints [li suoi devoti], with a saviour or a madonna on top".

Barocci opted for the Last Supper but depicted it with Christ standing and dispensing wafers to the kneeling disciples. Bellori records that the Pope objected to the devil appearing beside the kneeling Judas. That Barocci did consider this idea is clear from a drawing, but the documents do not mention it. They do mention the Pope's concern that

Christ's hand should hold the Host so as to display it prominently and also his decision that the artist should make it clear that the event took place at night. He had a young artist make a drawing to help Barocci understand what he meant. The Duke got Barocci to agree to the changes but thought it tactful not to show him the drawing. He warned that there would be further delays, and, in fact, Clement died before the painting was delivered.

Here, as usual, Emiliani supplies us with an excellent summary of the documents, but neither he, nor any other scholar, has, I think, provided the commentary they deserve. How odd was it to depict the devil in this context, at this date? How novel was it to insist on a nocturnal setting? Who previously had shown Christ standing and the disciples kneeling in this way? To this last question Mrs Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art* supplies a partial answer: she cites works by Fra Angelico, Palmezzano and Signorelli. John Shearman has also pointed out (in a review of the Barocci exhibition a decade ago in the *Burlington Magazine*) that Barocci must have known the painting of this subject by Justus of Ghent which was in Urbino. We may wonder whether "The Institution of the Sacrament" (a title used at the time) was considered as a distinct subject from the Last Supper, but the documents concerning Barocci's earlier painting in Urbino in which Christ is shown in the more usual manner (seated, holding a roll in one hand, looking up to heaven) describe this also as showing Him "when He instituted the sacrament".

When all the evidence is reviewed, the vagueness of the Pope's preliminary ideas is more remarkable than the precision of his subsequent emendations: and the conception of the subject would seem to have been due to the artist, not least because had the patron thought of it there would have been little anxiety about the vertical format. It is interesting that a very

similar vagueness is found in the preliminary approach made to Barocci in the autumn of 1574 by the rector of the Pia Confraternità dei Laici di Santa Maria della Misericordia in Arezzo. He asked Barocci to paint the altarpiece of their new chapel with "figures representing the mystery of the misericordia or some other mystery and histories of the most glorious Virgin".

Barocci replied that the mystery of the misericordia (which entailed the archaic convention of representing the confraternity at prayer and diminutive in scale in a circle beneath the Madonna's mantle) did not seem to him really appropriate for a "bella tavola" and he suggested that they settle on the Annunciation, Assumption, Visitation or some other episode. The rector urged the artist to come to Arezzo to discuss things. Barocci said that he was not well enough to travel and, in any case, felt that everything could be arranged by post. But the confraternity insisted and Barocci signed the contract in Arezzo, doubtless after discussions about the subject which, alas, have not been recorded. In view of what was specified in the contract there must have been a strong feeling that something of the spirit of the "mystery of the misericordia" should be retained.

The altarpiece (which is today in the Uffizi in Florence and known – but since when? – as the "Madonna del Popolo") depicts the confraternity at worship, with women and children kneeling at the left and men standing to the right. The Virgin appears kneeling on a cloud and indicating the mortal assembly to Christ who is seated on a slightly higher cloud and who extends his hand in blessing over a descending dove: God the Father appeared in a tondo above the altarpiece. The arrangement makes the character of the Virgin's role as intercessor far clearer than the old convention could have permitted, while the shadow cast by her cloud provides a metaphoric equivalent to

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the mantle and her elevation on a cloud replaces the gigantic stature. The real originality of the painting, however, consists in its representation of the confraternity and its charities, which are only referred to in the contract as "the populace to be portrayed in the manner, and with the status, appropriate to each individual depicted".

The men with a basket in the distance may be delivering food or clothing to prisoners, while in the foreground there is a half-nude man (presumably a cripple) lying on the ground, a hurdy-gurdy player (presumably a blind man) with eyes closed and a dog beside him, and a woman (presumably a young widow) with an infant. Barocci seems first to have planned to show one of the senior male members of the confraternity bending down to give alms to the cripple but he revised this idea (Emiliani suggests wittily and plausibly that such direct ministrations to the needy might have been considered undignified) and instead a boy is permitted to give a coin to the widow, and the cripple must make do with a compassionate look.

Meanwhile no one attends to the blind man's music except the child kneeling in the left foreground whose distraction in turn distracts his elder sister. The mother with a smile endeavours to draw the child's attention back to higher things. This humorous episode complements, but does not subvert, the solemnity of the scene as a whole. Nevertheless, it is the most prominent action in the painting, which was popularly known as the picture of the blind man. Emiliani writes very well about this great painting, but perhaps its originality has been underestimated. What other artist had made the pathos and comedy of the worshipper's everyday life the chief, or at least the most obvious, subject of an altarpiece? It is surely as bold a step as any taken by Caravaggio. Barocci's next large painting was "The Martyrdom of St Vitalis" (today in the Brera, Milan): one aspect of his treatment of the martyrdom is certainly indebted to the previous work. A child in the foreground has not been attending to the martyrdom but has been feeding a young jay (all the books call it a magpie)

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with cherries. Her mother, nursing an infant at the same time, bids her look as the Saint is hurled into a pit and boulders are heaped on top of him. According to Bellori (and Emiliani) the cherry and the "magpie" allude to the end of April when the martyrdom took place, but that hardly explains why they are incorporated in the narrative.

Harold Olsen, whose admirable monograph on the artist is not replaced by Emiliani's book, felt that Barocci had treated the subject "more as an entertaining spectacle than a horrifying act of violence" and he claimed that "apart from the executioners those present are quite indifferent". This echoes the distaste of the Inquisition at Veronese's inclusion of "dwarfs and Germans" as diverting marginalia to a sacred narrative only a few years before in Venice, but Barocci was a different sort of artist and the Inquisition would I think have seen that the entire group of witnesses on the left of the martyrdom – most evidently the earnest young men who must be intended as Cervasius and Protasius, the martyr's sons – are deeply moved. They are not shocked and sickened, but then they see in the atrocity a Triumph of Faith. The chorus provide exemplars for our own response to the painting. Indeed the chief impediment to our understanding of Barocci's intentions here is that they are regarding a scene, which is only a couple of feet in front of them, as a holy picture. The vertical format of the altarpiece and the need to give prominence to the martyr have necessitated the uncomfortable compression.

Thanks to the sponsorship of the Banca Popolare Pesarese, this is one of the most attractive books that has ever been devoted to an old master, and its colour plates are of high enough quality for us to marvel at the dazzling chromatic variety of Barocci's paintings and to relish, for example, the contrast, which Shearman emphasized, between those great late works in Rome: "The Presentation" and "The Institution of the Sacrament", the former with its whites and greys and creams and silvery light effects (which Bellori regarded as distractingly subtle) and the latter in which the figures "seem to glow like jewels among black velvet". Shearman may well be right to discern a response in the former case to the austere whitewashed interior then found in the Chiesa Nuova, and in the latter a response to the rich darkness of Clement VIII's Chapel, although Barocci's contemporaries were probably more struck by his failure, working at a distance, to judge the settings of his altarpieces correctly. "The Presentation" turned out to be too big and the yellow marble frame prepared for it had to be taken down; while the figures in "The Institution of the Sacrament" were felt to be out of scale with the statues on the same wall.

Colour is present in Barocci's drawings as well as in his paintings – especially in his pastel studies of heads inspired, Bellori claimed, by some "teste divinisime" by Correggio in this medium which (if they ever existed) have not survived. It is a pity that a few of Barocci's pastels are not reproduced in colour in this book because it would help us to see how he strove in his oil paintings to emulate the "sfumazione e sonvità del colore", whereby the world is made so seductively smooth, soft, and light in weight. Euphranor observed that a figure by an earlier Greek painter, Parrhasios, looked as if he had "fed upon roses". Emiliani, in his admirable account of Barocci's critical fortune, does not mention that this remark was cited in connection with Barocci's art in the eighteenth century – in succession by Daniel Webb, by Algarotti and by Reynolds (as F. W. Hiles pointed out). It does hint at the limitations of his art. Was he capable, we wonder, looking at "The Flight of Aeneas" and the "Martyrdom of St Vitalis", of depicting heroic resolution, ferocity, or brutality in the human face? And there is a grace in the turbulent composition of his Martyrdom such as Tintoretto in a similar composition would have avoided.

Emiliani's text is, for the most part, reprinted from that of the excellent catalogue of the Bologna exhibition of 1975. Most scholars will wish that he had modified it more than he has. Some of the eccentricities of the giant bibliography should have been removed and the additions to it are perfunctory and seem often to come in the wrong place. The most important discoveries made since the exhibition



A detail from the "Martyrdom of San Vitalis" by Barocci, which is in the Brera, Milan.

tion – for instance, the modello (in Stuttgart) for the artist's earliest surviving work, the St Cecilia altarpiece – are included, but, sometimes, only in passing. It is disappointing, for example, that Emiliani mentions the contract for the "Madonna del Popolo" (which Edmund Pillsbury published in the excellent catalogue of *The Graphic Art of Federico Barocci* in 1978) but does not incorporate or discuss its content, since it is, as I have tried to show, of great significance.

The exhibition in Bologna was unusual in displaying original paintings and drawings together – something difficult to do because of the low lighting which drawings require. In this book there are many more drawings reproduced than could be included in the exhibition and they are illustrated in appropriate sequences often, and with great effect, beside reproductions of details from the finished work. Whereas the 1975 catalogue included entries for the drawings exhibited, here the drawings reproduced are simply listed at the back with notes of medium and dimensions. As we follow these sequences the aptness of Emiliani's characterization of Barocci as "the Raphael of the Counter-Reformation" grows upon us, not only because of Barocci's profound, but frequently unobvious, debts to specific inventions by Raphael, but because of his development of certain of Raphael's favourite themes (the women and children in "The Madonna del Popolo" and "The Martyrdom of

St Vitalis", for instance, surely depend upon a study of the choral foreground females in Raphael's Vatican frescoes), and, above all, because of his adoption of Raphael's methods as a draftsman.

The crucial practices of studying from the model, and of making separate studies of drapery, hands, feet and heads, that were so important for Raphael, were quickly abandoned by his pupils and followers and their revival by Barocci is more likely to be related to his acquisition of drawings by his fellow citizen of Urbino than to his contact on visits to Rome with those pupils and followers. Having read Bellori it is tempting to suppose that it was through knowledge of Barocci's Raphaelesque methods that the Carracci re-established life drawing as central to their teaching and hence to European academic discipline generally. However, as both Shearman and Pillsbury have brilliantly demonstrated, Barocci's methods were less systematic than Bellori's account would lead us to suppose. The repetitions and revisions seem more often to have been made, compulsively, in pursuit of grace than carefully in pursuit of truth, and although it is certain that his paintings evolved slowly it is impossible to believe that he did not often draw with feverish energy. The emotions and actions he depicted are never those that it is natural for a model to adopt and the power of his imagination is always more evident than his powers of observation.

The Age of the Renaissance edited by Denis Hay (240pp. £20.05004015 X) first published in 1967 and recently reissued by Thames and Hudson opens with an essay "The Significance of Renaissance Europe" by Hay, which contains the following eight subdivided sections: Cradle of the Renaissance: The beginnings of humanism in Florence; The Florentine oligarchy; Quilts: families and power; Humanism and the artist: The rise of the Medici; The two cultures: The Academy of the "new Plato"; The End of Greatness. It is followed by Cecil Grayson's "Widening Circles: The Renaissance in Italy outside Florence", Peter Murray's "A New Vision: Italian art from Masaccio to Mannerism" with a subsection on the new architecture, Robert Weiss's "The New Learning: Scholarship from Petrarch to Erasmus",

Renaissance and Reformation in Germany" with a subsection on scientific advance, Joel Hurstfield's "Tradition and Change: English society under the Tudors" with a subsection on Shakespeare's London, A. A. Parker's "An Age of Gold: Expansion and scholarship in Spain" and L. D. Ettlinger's "The North Transformed: Art and artists in Northern Europe".

The book, which covers the period between 1400 and 1600, defines the growth and meaning of the "rebirth" of European culture after the Middle Ages. Tracing the movement, from its beginnings in Florence and development in other cities, to its effect throughout Europe on scholarship and ideas and its impact on art, Hay and his collaborators give unity to their project by focusing on the theme of

Expert of the everyday

Gilbert Adair

UMBERTO ECO
Faith in Fakes
Translated by William Weaver.
307pp. Secker and Warburg. £15.
0436 140888

The English-language title of Umberto Eco's foray into the semiology of the quotidian is a rather misleading one, only partially applicable to the twenty-six essays of which it is made up. To be sure, the first, lengthiest and most seductive piece, "Travels in Hyperreality", which whizzes us from Hearst's San Simeon castle to Lyndon Johnson's personal mausoleum, from the Ca' d'Zan, a half-Venetian, half-Venusian palazzo erected by the Ringling Brothers (of three-ring circus fame) in Florida to the concentration kitsch of Southern California's Madonna Inn, provides a panoramic, zigzagging overview of the United States' somewhat chilly "philosophy of immortality as duplication". In it, Eco demonstrates how a nation deprived of an extended historical continuum in the European sense has, with the manic compulsiveness of the jigsaw puzzle addict, proceeded to construct a false one. But the majority of the essays, which were originally published in journalistic form, range far beyond the allure of the fake. They encompass the trial of the Red Brigades, the collective suicide of the People's Temple in Guyana, the cool, unfeeling rationalism of Thomist theology, the crisis of reason (or rather what Eco defines as "the crisis of the crisis of reason") and the World Cup. A heterogeneous miscellany indeed, whose unifying principle, or so I suspect, was at least as much a publisher's incentive to capitalize on the freakish success of Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose* (of whose descriptive inventory-making a distinct echo may be detected here) as the presence of any truly consistent methodology.

Eco is, under his journalist's hat, a highly entertaining and perceptive "decoder" of the world, but the widely aired comparison with Barthes – and in particular with his *Mythologies* – strikes me as wholly advantageous to the latter. The nub of the problem lies, precisely, in the notion of the quotidian. Barthes was a stardust by subjecting to an operation of decipherment those really prosaic artefacts and activities which we had always allowed to "go

without saying" – whether a plate of steak and chips or an all-in wrestling match – he sensitized our environment with an aura of significance of which most of us had been unaware. He was therefore an "arming", rather than disarming, writer. There is, by contrast, not much that could be called quotidian about the Los Angeles Forest Lawn cemetery (immortalized by Evelyn Waugh in *The Loved One*), the vulgar wax versions of Leonardo's "Last Supper" which seem to dot the American hinterland or the "degenerate utopia" of Disneyland – all of them phenomena more startling in themselves than the commentary even so keen an observer as Eco can apply to them. Confronted with such delirious instances of pure connotation, of flagrant, frantic reproductivity, only the most naive of tourists could fail to turn himself without external prompting into an amateur semiologist; in consequence,

there is to this first essay a faintly Alan Whickers tone, a television pundit's craving to have the last word on something which is already audibly – in fact, noisily – emitting its own ambiguous messages.

Leaving aside the more theoretical texts, wonderfully translated by William Weaver, which are directly related to his experience as both a semiologist and a medievalist, Eco is at his sharpest when dealing with areas of perception where his readers are likely to have been only half-enlightened. As when, for example, discussing Montreal's Expo '67, he proposes that "in contemporary expositions a country no longer says, 'Look what I produce' but 'Look how smart I am in presenting what I produce'" and that "each country shows itself by the way in which it is able to present the same thing other countries could also present". Or when he dismantles the narrative codes underlying

Casablanca to demonstrate that "in order to transform a work into a cult object one must be able to break, dislocate, unhinge it so that one can remember only parts of it, irrespective of their original relationship with the whole". Or, again, when he ruefully observes how wearing a pair of jeans, ostensibly the symbol of vestimentary informality, tends to stiffen his natural demeanour instead of relaxing it. At such moments he is telling us something that many of us knew, perhaps, but which we needed to encounter in print for us to know that we knew. And in an increasingly terrorized and terrorized world – one which would have us believe that merely to speak about the weather, or a football match, or the varied minutiae making up our daily round, now requires some kind of specialized knowledge – any book prepared to offer us rapid access to such "expertise" can lay claim to a degree of indispensability.

Sharp eye and tongue

Jonathan Keates

GUIDO CERONETTI
Albergo Italia
226pp. Turin: Einaudi. L18,000.
88 06 589741

For the modern English reader the periodical essay is a literary species as emphatically extinct as the Tasmanian wolf or the flightless moa of New Zealand. Not so for the Italians. Besides the belletristic harvest of the weekly magazines – including Umberto Eco's skittish little tallpied in *L'Espresso* and Giorgio Bocca's sternly maverick "L'Antitaliano" – the newspapers are as generous as ever with space for such things. Indeed, the columns of *La Stampa* are the source of *Albergo Italia*, the second gathering of Guido Ceronetti's sharply personal glimpses of contemporary Italy.

Ceronetti is by no means well known in the English-speaking world. Besides lacking the glib elegance which plays easily into the hands of translators, he has fairly obviously gone his own way in terms of literary genre and style, and the presence of his formidable erudition, so unlike that modish allusiveness which ordinarily peppers articles of this kind, effectively discourages superficial or unadventurous reading.

The personality emerging from these essays is a surprising one in several respects. As a native Turinese the writer is heir to one of the most complex and intransigent of Italian cultural traditions, and it is with the ruthless clarity of the north, not always without a touch or two of the martinet, that we are invited to inspect that immense tract of Italy which is not Piedmont. Ceronetti is a restless, opinionated, often superbly intolerant cicerone, doubtful of his country's chances on its present course and never reluctant to call his fellow Italians to account.

The mayor of Venice's recent proposal to lay a 10,000 lire charge on tourists entering the city, for example, evokes an apoplectic explosion of well-merited wrath at the immemorial cupidity of the Venetians, who, Ceronetti proposes, should be taxed in revenge by the other Italian cities for the education of their souls. This, however, is a mere satirical pendant to a longer, more subtly depicted vision of Venice on Ceronetti's visit (to the Canareggio synagogues) at Yom Kippur as a place of purgation for the sins of the world, a massive hospital for spiritual disease, whose patients, the vacant-eyed files of Germans, Scandinavians and Japanese, are only offered a temporary cure.

A special blast is reserved for the Bay of Naples, where the authentic northern loathing

and disdain of the *mezzogiorno* is unleashed in summoning up the apocalyptic ghastliness of the *Isola di Capri* at Bagnoli. Yet even this, the author savagely insists, is better than the dehumanized chaos of Naples itself, a colossal marine sewer weltering amid *camorrista* corruption.

But then, as he acknowledges, twenty years of living in modern Rome, a city "fottuta tra sovrummi inimitabili scass-bang come Caput Mundi", can make you cynical even about cynicism. His lament, in an essay entitled "Abbiamo una patria", over the absence of a unifying national identity, is not, as might initially be feared, a rallying call to the adherents of the neo-fascist Movimento Sociale Italiano, but an arraignment of modern Italy on all too justifiable charges of spiritual emptiness and dislocation. Self-hatred may be rather too much in vogue among the Italian intelligentsia, but it is hard to quarrel with its manifestations here.

Case viste e pensate by Piero Ostellino (529pp. Milan: Rizzoli. L28,500. 88 17 53594 X) is a collection of recent journalism by the editor of the *Corriere della Sera*; it includes reportages from China, Mongolia, the Soviet Union and Israel as well as essays on drug addiction, and violence. The main section of the book contains articles on Italian and world politics.

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Yale University Press

13 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3JF

No arguing with English

Roy Harris

The Story of English
BBC2
ROBERT McCURM, WILLIAM CRAN and
ROBERT MACNEIL
The Story of English
372pp. Faber, in association with BBC
Publications. £14.95.
0563202475

The Story of English is one of those stories that has no discernible beginning and no foreseeable end, but an indefinitely expanding concentration of a middle. Squeezing it all, from Romans to reggae and from Anglo-Saxon to Japhish, into nine episodes (each comprising a one-hour television programme, accompanied by about thirty-five pages of text) is the remarkable feat of compression attempted by the book-cum-TV series *The Story of English*. Accordingly, the authors' declared aim "to tell the whole story" may charitably be treated as the brave statement of a guiding ideal rather than a serious claim by which their finished product should be judged. Their story-telling they admit frankly to be "more journalistic than scholastic".

Episode One ("An English-Speaking World") is concerned with English as an international medium of communication at the present day, and with how it has established that position over the past 150 years (through the British Empire and its public schools, the BBC, the Second World War, and the emergence of the United States as a military and economic superpower). The status of English as a world language is a facts-and-figures point laboured at somewhat unnecessary length. The television version also provides an opportunity for sampling live snatches of Californian surfing slang, Valley girlse and a rather boring gay comedian, as well as wheeling on various pundits to pronounce solemn bunality about English in the twentieth century. The "global village" proudly heads the cast of many clichés to come. The book quotes an anonymous Indian girl on one's marriage prospects without English. The reality is brilliantly captured on film by a sequence which shows top-drawer Indian brides-to-be looking through the matrimonial advertisement columns and explaining that *convent educated* means "English speaking" and why having English means having "class". An apparently related "class" point is lamely illustrated in the book by photographs of Harold Wilson, Arthur Scargill and Edward Heath. Only Scargill appears to be saying something, but what we are not told.

Episode Two ("The Mother Tongue") delves, as scriptwriters would say, deep into the past. Tacitus on the Angli provides the epigraph for gruesome shots of bog-burial corpses. What you said in proto-English when your throat was cut could have provided a good television discussion-point for a panel of Indo-European experts, but this we are mercifully spared. Being told that the Indo-European words originally came from "Central Europe" leads one to wonder what most viewers will understand that to mean: those who have the book may be surprised by the map which shows emigration arrows originating from a point to the north-east of Odessa. There follows potted history, from Julius Caesar to 1500. Alfred, the Vikings, 1066; Chaucer & Co. all get a look in. Star of the television show is dishy lead-guitarist Dr Christopher Page singing and twanging *Beowulf* with a panache that deserves to make the charts. This atones for some visually dull stuff about word-endings and word order. The explanation that Old English simplified its inflexions because they got in the way of bargaining with the Danes at market comes over as singularly unconvincing. (Yokels who haven't the wit to find a way of making it clear whether the price is for one horse or two horses are not likely to have the wit to do anything about their own morphology.)

Episode Three ("A Muse of Fire") introduces us to the English of Shakespeare and the King James Bible, and tells how it was taken across the Atlantic by the Elizabethans and their successors. Intrepid adventurers and the spirit of the age figure prominently here. We duly marvel at the size of the Bard's vocabulary and compare it with the meagre ration the biblical translators made do with. Shakespearean pronunciation leads on to the "Ilewater"

accents of the Eastern American seaboard, and a visit to the fishermen of Tangier Island. Then north to where the Pilgrim Fathers landed in the Mayflower. Next we follow the dialectologists of Plymouth Plantation back across the Atlantic to an inn in East Anglia, where they track down the original vowels of 1620 over a beer or two to add oral authenticity to their re-enactments of life in the seventeenth century back home.

Episode Four ("The Guid Scots Tongue") follows the history of English in Scotland, its transportation to Ulster in the seventeenth century, and thence to the New World. The Scots-Irish contribution to the hillbilly culture of the Appalachians is documented with excerpts from the telling of ancient "Jack Tales" and a glimpse of a genuine old moonshiner distilling illicit whisky up in the woods. Bonnie Prince Charlie, Burns, Walter Scott and Davy Crockett are among the historical *dramatis personae* who make an appearance. Samuel Johnson and his dictionary are given four pages in the book, but no corresponding footage on the screen, although they turn up briefly in a later programme. The demise of Scots Gaelic and Lowland Scots are touched on, the latter incomparably brought home by the deadpan newscaster who reads a hypothetical BBC news bulletin in Scots ("Yet another industry gangs apley wi the lorry drivers' strike ... etc").

At Episode Five, book and television programme begin to diverge. The book has a chapter called "The Irish Question". The material of this corresponds to Programme Eight, "The Loaded Weapon", which deals with the troubled history of the English and their language in Ireland, from Queen Elizabeth and Blarney Castle down to contemporary violence in Ulster. It also traces the influence of Irish immigrants on English outside Ireland, particularly across the Atlantic. As the result of doubtless unintentional foreshortening, both book and film manage to leave the odd impression that J. M. Synge and James Joyce were somehow products of the great potato famine of the nineteenth century. The book finds a pretext for discussing "the place of Ireland in American political life" and the visits to Ireland of Kennedy, Nixon and Reagan. It informs us quite gratuitously about the "element of chicane" so often associated with Nixon, and the Irish locals' lack of enthusiasm for Reagan. Both are evidently baddies. By contrast, the "huge crowds" Kennedy drew justify a picture of his motorcade in O'Connell Street.

Episode Six ("Black on White") brings book and film back in synchrony, and is in various ways the most successful, although probably the most controversial, in both. The slave trade, the emergence of pidgin English, plantation creole, jazz, George Gershwin, Cab Calloway, the Civil Rights movement and rapping are all topics guaranteed to engender a certain amount of heat under the white collar. The film cools it more than the book. Its methods of refrigeration only raise the temperature. The scenario of blacks learning pidgin English in the holds of the slave ships is implausible. We could have done without the heavenly-choir-type music linking Mr Spoons to Martin Luther King's famous speech at the Lincoln Memorial. We could also have done without ducking the question of language rights for "middle-class Blacks". The book ducks less, and even quotes a black superintendent of schools in Philadelphia as saying: "I know of no company or corporation which hires you on the basis of your ability to speak Black English."

Episode Seven borrows its title from Walt Whitman ("Pioneers! O Pioneers!") and the book promptly shifts into American spelling, having hitherto kept to British orthography. (The corresponding television instalment with the same title is Programme Five. What the video equivalent of American spelling is we are left to discover for ourselves.) This episode takes us from the Declaration of Independence down to the War "Over There," via the Gold Rush, Mark Twain, Webster's dictionary, the railroad network and the great European immigrations. Also included in the package is an excursion into Canadian English and a visit to Niagara Falls. The sound throughout is stereophonic and the script too. As the nineteenth century of scholasticism unfolds, and the Italians import more and more spaghetti into the language, the

twentieth-century audience is expected to wolf it down with the rest of the verbal delicatessen as if it needed it like a hole in the head, Mr Mencken.

Episode Eight ("The Echoes of an English Voice") in the book, corresponding to Programme Seven, "The Muvver Tongue", tells the story of Cockney, its rift with Franglais and its expulsion to Australia, dropping aitches all the way. Here lots of expletives get into the text which are decorously dodged on the screen, except when they can be put safely into the comic Australian mouths of Barry Humphries. Sheep-shearing, Waltzing Matilda and the sad, sad survivors of the aboriginal population eke out a somewhat thin narrative. South African English is briefly mentioned in the book, but is sanctioned sensitively out of the film version.

Episode Nine brings book and film back in step once more, albeit under different titles ("The New Englishes" vs "The Empire Strikes Back"). Off we go again around the world in eighty days, calling at all ports in the Caribbean, plus Sierra Leone, Papua New Guinea, Calcutta and Singapore. For seasoned television travellers, further trips to the Notting Hill Carnival and Bradford (which has a non-white mayor) are thrown in. Reggae superstar Bob Marley appears prominently in both print and lantern images.

A postscript in the book on "Next Year's Words" (missing from the television series) rightly questions the assumptions underlying the 1978 debate in the House of Lords on the deterioration of English, and castigates the "gurus of grammar", but predictably fudges the central issue of prescriptivism. It concludes with a literary quote (as it began, from Emerson): "Language is a city, to the building of which every human being brought a stone."

The Story of English will probably oussell Coca Cola in the Third World. It astutely presents just the story which consumers of English as an international language want to hear. But that is only one reason why what it does and how it does it are worthy of serious analysis. It also introduces a model for the telling of linguistic tales which is doubtless destined to be widely imitated, and is rich in both practical and theoretical implications. It launches linguistics into a new cultural orbit.

Significantly, *The Story of English* experiments with a compositional format which is becoming increasingly common in the video-recording age. It has carefully organized its material into a book and a film. But its book is not the "book of the film". Nor is its film the "film of the book". Their relationship is symbiotic, and to judge either in isolation from the other would be to misjudge the totality. This "cinematic" genre of communication is still going through an initial period of trial and error, but its basis is a solid one. Videos cannot be expected to give us footnotes, references, tables or diagrams without interrupting that dynamism which is essential to film as discourse. Nor can books be expected to make points which depend for their full effectiveness on generating visual and aural momentum. The solution lies not in an absolute division of informational labour but in a calculated complementarity. *The Story of English* gropes towards this ideal complementarity between dynamic and static modes of communication, sometimes awkwardly, sometimes skilfully. It is able, for instance, to avoid the horrors of phonetic transcription altogether, and even to comment polemically that "anyone who has spent time with the quasi-scientific writings of the phoneticians could be forgiven for thinking that their laborious notations hardly explain the mysteriously fluid substance they are trying to analyse."

Nowhere, however, does *The Story of English* turn its attention to analysing the subject of its own story, English, in terms of the opposition between dynamic and static modes of communication. Yet the subject itself cries out for such an analysis. Why and how was the opportunity missed?

The core of the answer is this. The notion that spoken language is essentially auditory whereas written language is essentially visual is one of those distorted half-truths which modern linguistics has erected into a theoretical dogma. This dogma permeates *The Story of English*, which, with perhaps unintentional irony, disclaims any interest in "the theory of language," though some linguistics is

implicit Before the telephone (a clearly unnatural instrument for sending messages, if ever there was one), speech meant face-to-face interaction, in which visual contact played no less important a role than auditory contact. Seeing, as our television masters know, is believing. But whereas television with one hand restores speech to its natural place as an audiovisual for of encounter, with the other hand it abstracts from the natural proximity between senders and receivers. All manner of communicational consequences flow from this, which so-called "media studies" experts have not even begun to unravel. What is relevant to *The Story of English* is simply the point that "a language" changes very fundamentally when it acquires a static as well as a dynamic mode of expression.

Not only does *The Story of English* fail to identify this crucial turning-point in the story of English, but it fails to see that it is falsifying the story by projecting backwards assumptions which only made sense once that turning-point has been passed. A double confusion ensues. There is no discussion whatever of the changing patterns and functions of English literacy. Yet Caxton, for example, has had retrospectively thrust upon him a linguistic significance which, in terms of the English of his own times, he simply did not have. This is symptomatic of the way in which "story" and "history" become systematically conflated. At the same time, it is symptomatic of a tendency to reinterpret the evolution of speech by superimposing upon it the evolution of writing.

This double confusion is a revealing example of how linguistic myths can be solemly perpetuated in linguistic formats which manifestly belie them. Other self-contradictions from the same source abound in *The Story of English*.

For instance, its brilliant success in conjuring up vowel sounds out of pints of ale and making consonants lean over five-barred gates obscures the fact that vowels and consonants themselves are alphabetic units. It is only by mapping this alphabetic atomization on to the flow of speech communication that the story of a language can be turned into an intercontinental pub crawl where rustics are made to act out in all innocence a script written by phonologists. What the poor rustics ever do with their quaint vowels and consonants, apart from recite equally quaint traditional tales, preferably wearing traditional costume, or pass the time of day in stage-managed encounters with the village postman, no one asks them. That is because their role in the story is to represent "the living past". Scenes of "progress and innovation" require a different cast of characters, mainly foreigners and writers of genius. These, according to *The Story of English*, are largely responsible for that flexibility and vitality which are the chief glories of the language. But when the Shakespearean verb *incarnadine* and the German borrowing *liverwurst* are alike counted as enrichments of English vocabulary it is time to ask whether someone has not simply mixed up language with lexicography. To tell the story of English as the story of its vowels and consonants, plus the story of its words and word-endings, is to rewrite history in terms of the analytic tools employed by linguists.

At one point only do the authors of *The Story of English* betray any uneasy suspicion that the story they are presenting does not quite match the story they are telling. They have qualms about their title. Is what they are recounting one story or a tangle of several? Is there just one English or are there many Englishes? Had those questions been taken seriously from the start, *The Story of English* might have developed quite differently. But then it would have had a narrative which needed many voices to tell it, and it would not have been at all the story there is a big market for.

The credibility of stories depends in the end on the credibility of their tellers. Paramount Chief Bai Sheborah Somanoh "Anlath" II of Sierra Leone, who appears in Episode Six, clearly knows this. He is "deeply respected by his people as a wise talker, as a man of words". According to the Paramount Chief, "When dey accept part of your speech to be de truth traditionally dey throw in a song in praise of what you have said." Doubtless dey are

Letters

Thought and Language

Sir, - In his review of James V. Wertsch's *Vygotsky and the Social Formation of Mind* (August 15), P. N. Johnson-Laird manages to condescend even while suggesting that he is sensitive to Vygotsky's real contribution to psychology. He writes that Vygotsky is an artist and his theories poetic; but that turns out to mean that he was pre-scientific and vague. Psychology has undergone a revolution, Mr Johnson-Laird tells us: "The computer has provided psychologists with a language for theorizing that replaces poetry with precise and explicit accounts of mental processes." The claim is unwarranted.

"Mental processes" (an unusual phrase for a psychologist) cannot be accounted for in the terms provided by information theory (cybernetics) because all acts of mind entail interpretation and the making of meaning, and they are not reducible to binary oppositions. ("Information" in information theory has nothing whatever to do with "information" in the sense of *what there is to know*.) The positivist impulse is always thus to reduce any phenomenon to factors and then to build models to show how they fit together. Vygotsky countered this principle by arguing that the study of the relationship of thought and language must begin not with these separate elements but with "the unit of meaning". As their experiments continually attest, psychologists do not understand the difference. (To imply that George Miller's experiments are refinements of Vygotsky's famous concept-formation test is like saying that Edgar Guest improved on William Blake.)

The psychologists' "revolution" is a politically costly delusion because educationalists, ignorant of semiotics and generally committed to a Piagetian stage model of "cognitive development" (Johnson-Laird is mistaken in saying that there are no pedagogical implications in Piaget's work), follow their lead in turning to the computer to solve the problem of illiteracy. The psycholinguistic "revolution" is not only an impediment to the development of a philosophy of language which could illuminate the social formation of mind; it actively forestalls the authentic transformation of pedagogy.

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02125

Mark Twain and Christian Science

Sir, - It was rather surprising to come across a review (August 15) of one of Mark Twain's lesser works, his *Christian Science* (1907), and especially to find it stating that there had been no other "modern reprints". The book is by no means a rarity and has been reprinted regularly with new editions of Twain's collected works, most recently the authoritative scholarly edition published by the University of California Press in 1973.

It was also surprising to find your reviewer rehearsing as fact Twain's claims about the use of the term "Mother Mary"; the phrase isn't used in services, least of all as an "honorific title" for the Church's founder, Mary Baker Eddy. It wasn't used in that way in Twain's time, either - in fact, she expressly repudiated such comparisons.

I make the point, not to score off your reviewer (Julian, Moynahan's literary and academic credentials aren't in question), but to illustrate the way in which Twain's often funny, sometimes tormented, but always highly personal perspective has misled several generations of commentators who have taken his descriptions of Christian Science at face value.

Professor Moynahan quite misses the extraordinary ambivalence Twain displays towards Christian Science, most noticeably perhaps in his correspondence. As several scholars have pointed out in recent years, his writings on Christian Science reveal much more about his own inner spiritual conflicts than about Christian Science, just as his curious polemic *Is Shakespeare Dead?* (denying Shakespeare's authorship of the plays) tells considerably more about Twain/Clemens's artistic insecurities than about Shakespeare.

continued on page 1029

In 1986 it should be possible to approach "Twain's debunking critique", as the review terms it, with at least a measure of critical distance - and genuine balance. For the debunking itself needs debunking, if only to make clear that Twain's caricature of Christian Scientists' faith is just that - a caricature, not a portrait from life.

The same applies to his stock casting of Mrs Eddy as religious leader cum power-hungry female cum business tycoon. Surely feminist scholars have shown often enough by now how closely such images mirror the general nineteenth-century stereotypes of "public women" who acted outside traditional female roles. (A recent article on Mrs Eddy in the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* makes that point specifically.) The historian Robert Peel has noted wryly that Twain's over-idealized attachment to the "conventional image of the Victorian lady" not only coloured his judgments of Mrs Eddy - she was anything but conventional - but resulted in a thoroughly fictionalized portrayal of her as "a mixture of Calamity Jane and Hetty Green". The massive biographical evidence brought to the surface by Peel and others in past decades has established that Mrs Eddy was both a far more complex human being and a far more deeply committed Christian than Twain was able to see or willing to acknowledge.

Yet paradoxically, it was the Christianity of her *teaching* that most attracted Twain, confirmed sceptic though he was. Your reviewer is correct in stating that the great author saw the New Testament as the basic inspiration for Christian Science, but Twain himself actually carried this insight much further. As he wrote in one of several strikingly "religious" (and often overlooked) passages in the book:

For the thing back of it [Christian Science] is wholly gracious and beautiful: the power, through loving mercifulness and compassion, to heal all fleshly ills and pains and griefs These things are true, or they are not. If they were true seventeen and eighteen and nineteen centuries ago it would be difficult to satisfactorily explain why or how or by what argument that power should be non-existent in Christians now.

Such passages seem hauntingly contemporary in the shadow of the current debates sparked by the Bishop of Durham. The real significance of Twain's book may lie less in its prevailing note of cynicism than in what it discloses in quieter moments about the unfulfilled spiritual yearnings of its author. This recognition would require not only a fresh approach to the book but also a much more serious assessment of Christian Science, which isn't by any means lacking in awareness of the funny/tragic conditions of human experience that Twain's best works of art capture so well.

RICHARD ROBINSON,
Christian Science Committee on Publication, 108
Palace Gardens Terrace, London W8.

Anti-Arab Feeling in the United States

Sir, - Why did George E. Gruen and Harry Milkman, in their very heartening letter (September 5) repudiating anti-Arab violence in the United States, feel it necessary to "respectfully disagree" with an "assertion" I never made? In my column of May 30 I did not say that there had been no Jewish protest at the recent succession of outrages against American Arabs. I said that there had been no such protest at the threats to Professor Edward Said. And of these threats, Gruen and Milkman go on to say, they were "previously unaware".

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS,
915 Massachusetts Avenue NE, Washington, DC
20002.

Cultural Property

Sir, - Richard Pankhurst (Letters, September 5) has conveniently forgotten to inform your readers how the Emperor Tewodros acquired the manuscripts which the British Army found at Magdala.

Tewodros had grandiose plans for a splendid library to be attached to the church of Medhane Alem (Saviour of the World), which was never built. He was an avid collector of

manuscripts. He got them by looting the churches in Gondar and elsewhere, which he then burnt after having disposed of the priests in a way that is reminiscent of the unsavoury methods used by the present unspeakable régime in Addis Ababa.

BENT JUEL-JENSEN,
St Cross College, Oxford.

Palestine under the Mandate

Sir, - Allow me to comment on Wm Roger Louis's review (August 8) of *Failure in Palestine*, by Martin Jones.

Professor Louis asks why Britain, determined to quit Palestine, invited the United Nations "into the affairs of a British administration". The answer is that since it was not intended to pursue Sir Harold MacMichael's 1941 plan of abolishing the Mandate and declaring the territory a Crown Colony, there was hardly any alternative. For the UN, after all, was successor to the League of Nations under whose auspices the Mandate operated. (The Mandatory was obliged to submit annual reports to the League Council and, in addition, reply to a lengthy questionnaire set by the permanent Mandates Commission.)

The use by Louis of the phrase, "of a British administration", inadvertently screens the basic relevant fact that Britain administered Palestine solely because of the Mandate, the primary purpose of which was to promote the establishment of the Jewish national home. Palestine was no ordinary British domain.

It was because HMG decided in May 1939 to dispense with this basic fact by the adoption of the White Paper policy - which stood the Mandate on its head - that it eventually found itself in the predicament it did: subject to "humiliation, despair and frustration", as Louis rightly observes.

No policy which resulted in a kind of private war between the Colonial Office and Jewish refugees trying to escape from Nazi-occupied Europe could ever yield Britain a beneficial result. It failed to help the war effort in any way, and, as far as the Arabs were concerned, they were far more interested in their leader, Haj Amin El-Husseini, being awarded the rank of an SS Gruppenführer by Heinrich Himmler than co-operation with Britain and her allies, the White Paper policy notwithstanding.

This brings me to a consideration of Harold Beeley's role. Louis exonerates him from responsibility for the British débâcle and claims that Ernest Bevin must shoulder the blame. Technically, of course, this is correct. But Ministers of the Crown take great care to listen to their expert advisers and at the Foreign Office Beeley's voice was dominant. Alas, Beeley was wrong on all major issues. (Bevin should have been forewarned by reading Lewis Namier's article, "Really, Mr Beeley!") It remains to add that the persistent Mr Beeley was still at it early in 1949, after Israel was established, in an attempt to stop oil reaching the Jewish State, as recounted by Lord Sieff in a speech a month or two ago.

Finally, Professor Louis says that the "withdrawal from Palestine was a military operation conducted solely with regard to the protection of British lives and property". Those of us who were obliged to monitor day after day what Christopher Sykes has described as the "five-and-a-half months' blundering" after November 29, 1947, could tell a different story. Nobody has ever explained how withdrawing Palestine from the International Postal Union, for example, saved a single British soldier's life. Far more to the point were Dr Weizmann's comments in a letter to Leo Amery in October 1948: "The policy of the Foreign Office is fatal. I cannot describe to you in detail the chicanery to which we have been subjected here. They left Palestine in a completely chaotic condition, no railway, no port or telegraph"

DAVID CARRINGTON,
12 Netherfield Road, Finchley, London N12.

The caption to the picture on page 1022 of last week's TLS should have read "Members of the 5th ARVN Cavalry aid civilians fleeing from an NVA attack on Bien Hoa in March 1969".

Einaudi

Primo Levi The Vanquished and the Redeemed

A new book from the author of *The Periodic Table*.
A striking example of the novel cum documentary essay genre about the world of the Nazi concentration camps and the human predicament as a whole. (Nicola Tranfaglia, *la Repubblica*).

Pier Paolo Pasolini Letters (1940-1954)

The letters offer new insights into the human and intellectual path pursued by this most disturbing and problematic of Italian writers. Available in November.

Alberto Cavallari The Flight of Tolstoy

The «moment of truth» in the life of Tolstoy: Cavallari's reconstruction uses an imaginative montage of documents and eye-witness accounts to delve into the *raison d'être* of the novelist's craft.

Norberto Bobbio Ideological Profile of Italy in the 20th Century

The ideology of contemporary Italy: a great history lesson, a strong plea for a difficult democracy.

Carlo Ginzburg Myths Emblems Spies

Seven essays on mythology and history: witchcraft and folk piety, Aby Warburg and his followers, Titian and the patterns of erotic portrayal, Germanic mythology and Nazism, Freud, the Wolf-Man and werewolves.

Marcello Pera The Ambiguous Frog

The exemplary case of the controversy about «animal electricity» between Volta and Galvani: what decides the destiny of two rival theories?

Vincenzo Di Benedetto Physicians and Illness

A detailed analytical overview of the medicine of Hippocrates: its diagnoses, therapies, instruments and ideas.

Antonio Faeti Trapped with the Mouse

A reading of Mickey Mouse
Law-abiding, square, friend of the powerful: just who is Mickey Mouse?

Manfredo Tafari Venice and the Renaissance

The scientific, architectural and religious life of Venice in the 16th century. By the same author: *History of Italian Architecture 1944-1985*.

Manlio Brusatin The Art of the Fantastic

Robots, monsters, magic boxes, mammoth machines: the technique and imagery of the fantastic from the 16th to the 18th centuries.

History of Italy IX. The Church and Political Power

Edited by Giorgio Chittolini and Giovanni Miccoli
In this ninth supplementary volume, a complete picture of the relationship between Church and society in Italy from the origins to the present day.

Antiquity in Italian Art Edited by Salvatore Settis

Historians, art historians and archaeologists jointly consider the continuing presence of antiquity in later Italian art.

1. The Use of the Classics
2. Styles and Themes Rediscovered
3. From Tradition to Archaeology

In 1986 Einaudi translated works by Roland Barthes, Samuel Beckett, Thomas Bernhard, Walter Benjamin, Fernand Braudel, Hermann Broch, Northrop Frye, Ernst H. Gombrich, Bohumil Hrabal, Richard Krauthammer, Jacques Le Goff, Aaron J. Gurevitz, Jean Lévi, Benoît B. Mandelbrot, Arthur Miller, Robert Musil, Joseph Needham, Ilya Prigogine, Manuel Puig, João Ubaldo Ribeiro, Gilbert Rouget, Marshall Sahlins, Jaroslav Seifert, Tsvetan Todorov, Ludwig Wittgenstein.

John Coile

COMMENTARY

Culture and consumption

Julian Graffy

DAVID HARE
The Bay at Nice
Wrecked Eggs
Cottesloe Theatre

In a back room of a Leningrad museum in 1956, a mother and her daughter are waiting to see a painting recently bequeathed to the museum which may or may not be by Matisse. An assistant curator brings the painting but the mother, Valentina Nrovka, who had been Matisse's pupil in Paris almost forty years previously, is not yet ready to look at it, and commands that it be stored, draped in a cloth, in a corner, on the floor, against a fire-bucket. In *The Bay at Nice* this fake, this masterpiece, which we the audience will never be allowed to see, presides enigmatically over talk of painting, of painting and enjoyment, of painting and discipline, of painting and the state; but also over talk of personal life, of feelings, and fate. For the daughter, Sophia, wants to leave her successful headmaster husband for a new lover, Peter Linitsky.

Sophia speaks with febrile intensity of her rights and entitlements "as a woman", but Nrovka cuts withering rhetorical swathes through her daughter's increasingly uneasy self-justification. The lover, Peter, is an absurd figure, balding, sixty-two, a collector of model aeroplanes. Does not the daughter want him precisely because he is a mediocrity? If her daughter's words are love, freedom, happiness, Nrovka's are responsibility, discipline ("Matisse taught us rules") and adulthood ("People should stick"), words which apply equally to life and to art. What she finds most risible of all is the wish of her daughter and Peter to have answers, to feel right and certain in what they are doing. Offer return from exile she tells Peter "I made a decision". To his question, "Were you right?", she replies "I have no idea." Not that the rhetoric is all one-sided: Sophia has a marvellous speech on the demeaning absurdity of the names of ordinary jobs (Peter works for the sanitation board). And the embrace of mother and daughter near the end of the play provides an eloquent counter-balance to the jaundiced disapproval in Nrovka's words.

The history of Russia in the twentieth century is alluded to in *The Bay at Nice*. The characters speak of the emigration to Paris in the 1920s, of the Party and of socialist realism. These questions are not obtrusively dwelt

Making friends

James Campbell

Dust
ICA Cinema

"I'd like you to tell me how to be pretty", says Magda to Anna, her black servant, in *Dust*. "I'd like to be your friend," Magda, played by Jane Birkin, is in fact not bad looking, but deranged and badly in need of a friend. She has killed her father, who took Anna for his mistress: she has been raped by Hendrik, Anna's husband; and now, on the remote South African farm which by parricide she has inherited, she inhabits a private zone of disturbance from which she ventures only to attempt yet again the impossible act of love across the racial divide.

In Marion Hansel's treatment of J. M. Coetzee's novel *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), all confrontations are sexual and therefore potentially lethal; a guilty, but inevitable, result of sexual prohibition. A barren, frustrated woman like Magda can speak neither kindly nor cruelly to a servant such as Hendrik. After she has buried her father, with Hendrik's initial assistance, she tells him to wear the old man's clothes. But he puts on the wrong ones and she snaps at him. "Does Miss want me to take off your clothes?" he answers back, leaning into Magda's face and unbuckling his trousers. To Magda, Anna, who as Hendrik's wife has an affair with men not known to her, is also enviable and sexually alluring, and in such an atmosphere she is bound to find her feelings for

upon, however; Hare's concerns transcend his context, and his eloquence and wit provide an absorbing variation. He is well served by his actors, particularly by Irene Worth, who invests the unillusioned Nrovka with grace, humour and courage.

In a weekend cottage in Rhinebeck, New York State, Robbie and Loelia are having a "splitting-up party" after ten years of marriage. In *Wrecked Eggs* the talk is of sex, money, food, possessions, success—as good, as much and as often as possible. The talk is also more about America and the absurdity of foreigners, a reminder of Hare's earlier metaphorizations of the individual into the national.

Parallels and contrasts between the two plays soon become apparent. In the first a couple are attempting to come together, in the second about to part. In each a third character, a woman, questions the rightness not just of this action, but of all of the couple's assumptions. There are quotations of the concerns of the first play in the second. The third character in *Wrecked Eggs*, Grace, the only guest, is a disenchanted press agent (here Hare re-reads old ground from *Pravda*) who does offer some eloquent rejoinders to Robbie: "Is there nothing? Is everything allowed?" (Hare quoting *The Brothers Karamazov*): "I hate this idea that we're all just sensation. I feel good, I don't feel good", but overall she lacks Nrovka's gravity and intelligence.

Hare writes about Europeans and Americans, about deprivation and excess, culture and consumption. For a European audience it is unsurprising, perhaps even initially flattering to find his Americans trite and vulgar, his Europeans intense and complex, but, to quote Hare, "Is it right?" One cannot help noticing that the dice are loaded. The main Russian protagonists are an artist and her teacher daughter: the American couple a lawyer and his tennis coach wife. The Russian sanitation engineer responds with radiant joy to talk of Matisse. Would Hare let his American equivalent do likewise? Does he believe that European sanitation engineers are more cultured? Is he right? The weaknesses of the second play are obvious. There is an inappropriate and undeveloped melodramatic subplot which reveals Robbie to be the son of a spy and some cross over-writing in Robbie's reaction to the mention of death. More importantly the doggedly clichéd view of Americans, unengagingly vulgar in the pursuit of sensation, casts doubt upon Hare's whole enterprise. *The Bay of Nice* alone is a more satisfying offering than with *Wrecked Eggs* to follow.

her father in a tangle as well.

Jane Birkin could have made of this character simply a bitter, hateful crone, but instead has invested the entreaties and pleas which form the staple of her speech ("What do you call me when you think of me?") she pathetically asks Anna) with a whispering cruelty which occasionally verges on the precious. In the whole of this vivid, poetic film there is rarely an exchange of more than two sentences. She begs; he snaps. She howls; he groans and runs away. Birkin's Magda is a shade too attractive to be wholly credible. She needn't be a hag but she ought at least to seem twisted, and Birkin, though she is a fine actress, is dogged by the glamour of the silver screen. John Matshikiza as Hendrik appears confused by this: his response to Magda has not the menace nor the vibrancy nor the sullenness which would have made him an adversary. The moment in *Dust* when two characters communicate most intensely is in the wordless scene when Magda's aged, deteriorating father (Trevor Howard) luxuriates naked in the strong brown arms of Anna (Nadine Uwampa). The quality of Howard's acting is no less than one would expect, but it is Ms. Uwampa's deep, self-preserving Anna which is the most convincing performance.

Dust is a film made by a Belgian, based on a novel by a South African, filmed in Spain, with two English stars. The script is spare and the subject is the abyss which separates human beings, but there is also a lack of communication between the characters which cannot have been intended.

Under the rod

Paul Preston

FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA
The House of Bernarda Alba
Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith

On June 19, 1936, Federico García Lorca completed *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*, his impassioned work about the repressive nature of Spanish rural society. Two months later, he was dead, murdered by fascists in his home town of Granada. He had gone there for safety to avoid the political upheavals of Madrid, only to become one of 5,000 civilians shot there by the Right in the course of the Civil War. He was killed because what he once called "the worst bourgeoisie in Spain", the right-wing establishment in Granada, wanted to silence him and his works. The fiftieth anniversary of both events is commemorated by a production at the Lyric Theatre which vividly recreates the underlying social and sexual violence of southern Spain in the 1930s.

The austere setting by Ezio Frigerio, collaborator of Giorgio Strehler at La Scala and elsewhere, is as monumentally operatic as might have been anticipated. Suitable for *Fidelio*, the crumbling stucco walls with their grilled windows make the oppressive Casa the central character. After the funeral of their father, cursed by Gillian Hanna's mischievous maid for his bottom-pinching, the tyrannical Bernarda's five plain daughters are immured in its *patio* as in a prison yard or a convent cloister. Complaints have been heard that the lowering walls of the courtyard do not convey an adequate sense of the cruel and unrelenting heat of Andalusia. However, Frigerio's lighting seems to me to follow Lorca's own conception. Talking of the house in the village of Valderrubio which inspired the play, he spoke of a "cold and silent hell in the middle of the African sun like a tomb of living people under the iron rod of their warden". The setting thus carries much of the play's symbolism and so liberates the cast to concentrate on the battles fought out by the women trapped within its claustrophobic grip.

The symbolism concerns sexual and social feudalism and the links between them. In ultra-reactionary Granada, Lorca's homosexuality had given him a sense of apartness. It led him to sympathize politically with those on the margins of society and emotionally with those whose personal lives were distorted by the stifling conventions of the time. In rural Granada,

National honour

Isabel Fonseca

JOSÉ TRIANA
Worlds Apart
Translated by Kate Littlewood and Peter Whelan
The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon

Worlds Apart, a play by the exiled Cuban writer José Triana, who now lives in Paris, spans the period from 1894 to 1914, when Spanish rule may have officially ceased, but its cultural legacy of *machismo* if anything increased, perhaps as a substitute for any more substantial form of nationalism. Looking at the puffed-up pride and false honour in one family, Triana attempts to expose the helpless predicament of his country.

A brillianted slickness—all the strutting, fanning and nostril flaring that characterizes this play—barely glosses over the terrifying inability of each character to decide his own fate. Such realizations push the family members to seek unorthodox solutions. At the centre is Victoria, who, although she is committed to her role as a *mujer honrada*, finds that her personal war of liberation requires a compromising romance. When Victoria becomes a slave of love we have the theme of the play: one form of domination is much like, and usually engenders, another. This is the point about the Spanish Colonialists and, in turn, the Yagui Imperialists, made so repeatedly and so subtly as a machete hacking through a field of cane.

that meant the wretched farm labourers and women of all classes, victims alike of a society based on oppression and hypocrisy. That Bernarda Alba's household is not representative is demonstrated by the savagery of the villagers heard dragging a "fallen" woman through the streets outside. The sexuality denied by Bernarda is all around if unseen: in the stamping of the stallion in the stable; in the songs of passing farmhands; in the furtive visits of Pepe el Romano, the local gold-digger.

Glenda Jackson's Bernarda is as stiff-backed as the most humourless prison governor or mother superior, dominating her brood with snarling sarcasm and fulminating looks. She has a splendid foil in Joan Plowright, who sets up a sparkling counterpoint with her as the superbly earthy housekeeper, Poncia, needing her mistress until cruelly reminded of her place. Patricia Hayes plays Bernarda's mad mother with a disturbing, senile sensuality, bizarrely mouthing what her grand-daughters do not dare: the desire to marry and escape to the coast. The five spinsters are good but not up to those standards, hampered perhaps by the director Nuria Espert's encouragement of hysterical shrieks at tense moments and even more by the near impossibility of rendering Lorca in English. They scamper hectically across the stage in search of gossip, their public-school accents awakening unwanted echoes of St Trinian's. Julie Legrand provides a memorable portrait of the gawky eldest, Angustias, whose inheritance is Pepe el Romano's real target. However, his sexual goal, the youngest, Amelia, is played by Amanda Root as a spoilt undergraduate whose final suicide makes a far from convincing dénouement.

The difficulties lie in the language. Lorca's poetry and plays are alive with the melody of the Andalusian folksongs which he himself collected and harmonized, but also with the agony of *cante jondo*. This raises a daunting problem of translation. In 1935, the celebrated New York production of *Doña de Sangre*, rendered as "Bitter Oleander", was slammed by the critics. *The New York Times* dismissed it loftily as "the poetics of the pigsty". Thereafter Lorca was hostile to translation of his works as "destroying the spirit of the language". The version used here is by Robert David Macdonald of the Glasgow Citizens' Theatre. Realistic and supple, its lilting rhythms inevitably lack some of the pulsing sexual innuendo of the original. Nevertheless, it is about as near as we are likely to get to a plausible and stageable version. As presented by the Lyric, it reaffirms the house's growing international status.

One suspects that the play has suffered similar brutalities in translation—in any case grandiloquence sounds better in Spanish. Despite the distended melodrama, however, the company manages, with energy and obvious enjoyment—especially in their steps towards Spanish dancing—to capture the glamour of Havana before the First World War.

The set, with its filigree balcony, from which black-clad widows, in their gossamer of Spanish lace, mournfully preside over a changing Cuba, evokes old Seville as well as adding a welcome vertical dynamism to the small theatre. *Worlds apart*—the old world and the new—are nicely illuminated: candle-light for Catholicism, torches blazing the way to revolution. Two parallel scenes—in the first act, three women's ritual corseting for Victoria's wedding and a life of honourable hypocrisy, and in the second, three men seeking oblivion in hashish from their political and sexual impotence—give space for some fine performances. (Perhaps it is a clever innovation of the director, Nick Hamm, to have the men so stoned that the corniness of their dialogue and ideas seems just right.) Powerful performances, particularly that of Joely Richardson in the part of Victoria, hold *Worlds Apart* together, but the play none the less falls unhappily between family chronicle and politico-historical analysis. Triana is over-ambitious in tackling racism, feminism, incest, political corruption, North-South relations and the uncreated conscience of his race, but throughout this over-long sprawl the cast successfully conveys an energetic pulse of *corazón*.

COMMENTARY

Burlington Bertie goes to war

David Nokes

ALAN BLEASDALE
The Monocled Mutineer
BBC1

There is something engagingly cavalier about choosing, as the hero of a historical event, a man who never took part in it. Yet if Falstaff may be permitted to carry off the battle honours of Shrewsbury field, why should not Percy Toplis be allowed the starring role in the mutiny at Étaples? Understandably enough, the historical adviser to the series *The Monocled Mutineer* has disclaimed "all responsibility for the factual errors and misinterpretations" that abound in it. And some newspapers have chosen to attack the series as a deliberate piece of left-wing BBC distortion. But the real problems with the muddle of history and fiction are dramatic, not historical.

The middle two episodes of this four-part series, which deal with the mutiny itself, form a self-contained story starring Timothy West as a porcine general and Penelope Wilton as a shrill Lady Bountiful. The first and last episodes present the picaresque career of Percy Toplis (Paul McGann), smooth-faced charlatan, prankster, con-man and cynic. Not only is there no necessary thematic link between these elements, but stylistically the various episodes of the series belong to several quite distinct genres. The length and lushness of the production, with its careful attention to period

details, suggest the authentic reconstruction of dramatized documentary. Close-up sequences of the squalor, death, brutality and degradation of trench warfare establish a tone of what passes on television for social realism. Yet the jaunty cocksure tones of Toplis produce a style of instant caricature which turns each scene into a comic cut. His intervention in the mutiny is a matter of theatre, not history. Acting as impresario, star and chorus he fashions the event into his own form of costume drama in which such props as monocles, gas-masks and swagger sticks are more important than principles. Meanwhile West and Wilton do their best with a sour and rather doughy piece of social comedy about name-dropping, short-sleeves and people who manicure their nails with a pen-knife.

Paul McGann has the right kind of baby-face ruthlessness to convey the chameleon charm of a man with as many names as costumes. Cherie Lunghi, as his girlfriend, claims to recognize "the boy behind the thug's embrace", and Toplis has a plausible and lucrative knack for stimulating protective instincts in the women he meets. But his portrayal as the overnight hero and leader of gangs of working-class Geordies, Scots and Australians is frankly unconvincing. The most successful element in his characterization is the way he consistently cheats our expectations by turning moments of poignancy and intimacy into market opportunities. He comforts a bereaved mother in order to con five pounds from her; a joyful reunion with an old comrade leads to a threat of blackmail; he

grieves for an uncle dying of pneumoconiosis, then adds "he won't be needing his bike". He wants the bike to look for work in London, a nod in the direction of Tebbury—one of a number of political winks and nudges in the series.

Each time, we are encouraged by the tone and framing of these scenes to anticipate some insight into the "real" Toplis, the boy behind the thug. But in every case the sentimental language is exposed as cheap routine and the grainy camera-work as a piece of filmic patter. This kind of irony is a difficult effect for television to achieve since the clichés it exposes are those most often fostered by period drama and at least partially endorsed by this series itself. The same problem dogs the language of the series. The success of *The Boys from the Black-Staff* came from an idiomatic energy which turned characters into types rather than the other way round. But Bleasdale's language in *The Monocled Mutineer* occupies an unhappy no man's land between period slang and self-conscious facetiousness. The results are often dire: "I'm a pacifist", "I'd an uncle who collected stamps."

Whether intentionally or not, the series appears, like Toplis himself, a magnificent cheat, a lavish and expensive hoax. When Toplis darts behind a tree to emerge, moments later in a complete new outfit, the perfect military dandy, in order to assist a lady daintily kicking her car in an affection of vexation, we know we have left the realism of the Western Front for the whimsy of Mills and Boon. The

Emotional excesses

Richard Osborne

GIOACCHINO ROSSINI
Bianca e Falliero
Conservatorio Rossini, Pesaro

A ticket for the Rossini Festival in Pesaro is becoming one of the most sought-after properties on the European festival scene. Small theatres, a limited number of performances, and a large Continental press corps help cause the scarcity; but so do the charm of the place and the quality and novelty value of the music-making. This year, a dozen piano recitals under the title "Omaggio a Liszt" and open-air concerts by Marilyn Horne and Luciano Pavarotti were mere side-shows to the revivals of *Il turco in Italia* and *Le Comte Ory* in the charming Teatro Rossini, and a new production of an important Rossini rarity, *Bianca e Falliero*, handsomely staged in the Conservatorio's Auditorium Pedrotti by Pier Luigi Pizzi. Against a backdrop of stage pictures in the style of Veronese, the opera was dazzlingly sung back into life by a cast which included Katia Ricciarelli, Marilyn Horne, and the young American tenor Chris Merritt, who already has a precocious command of that heroic coloratura style which culminates in the creation of the role of Arnold in *Guillaume Tell* (scheduled for Pesaro for 1988).

Rossini wrote *Bianca e Falliero* for La Scala, Milan, in the autumn of 1819. Working away from the San Carlo in Naples, his private artistic laboratory at the time, and with memories of his last Milanese opera, *La gazza ladra*, still fresh in the public's mind, he clearly set his sights on consolidation rather than experiment. The choice of subject (approved by Rossini in unpublished letters written to his librettist Romani four months before the *prima*) tells us as much. Set in seventeenth-century Venice, the story charts the machinations of a brutal father (Contareno, Merritt) who would rather have the brilliant young general Falliero, (Horne *en travesti*) compromised, arraigned and executed than see him marry his daughter, Bianca, for whom he plans a politically advantageous marriage. In the French melodrama from which Romani took his libretto, Falliero comes to a grim end, much as Cavaradossi will later do in *Tosca*; but Rossini and Romani, politically prudent, opted for a happy end to the tale.

The opera was a success with the Milanese in 1819, and was revived in 1820. It was then that Rossini wrote *Bianca e Falliero* for La Scala, Milan, in the autumn of 1819. Working away from the San Carlo in Naples, his private artistic laboratory at the time, and with memories of his last Milanese opera, *La gazza ladra*, still fresh in the public's mind, he clearly set his sights on consolidation rather than experiment. The choice of subject (approved by Rossini in unpublished letters written to his librettist Romani four months before the *prima*) tells us as much. Set in seventeenth-century Venice, the story charts the machinations of a brutal father (Contareno, Merritt) who would rather have the brilliant young general Falliero, (Horne *en travesti*) compromised, arraigned and executed than see him marry his daughter, Bianca, for whom he plans a politically advantageous marriage. In the French melodrama from which Romani took his libretto, Falliero comes to a grim end, much as Cavaradossi will later do in *Tosca*; but Rossini and Romani, politically prudent, opted for a happy end to the tale.

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Laurence Sterne's *Martin*. In a print of Angelica Kauffmann's picture of 1779 which became one of the best known of sentimental images. This is one of fifty prints in *Affecting Moments: Prints of English Literature made in an Age of Sensibility 1775-1810* at Wolfson College, Oxford, until October 3.

location filming, the hundreds of extras, the mud, the gas, the dying agonies, are all part of an elaborate disguise for some music-hall hokum which starts with Burlington Bertie and ends with the Keystone Cops.

David Nokes will be reviewing radio and television regularly for *Commentary*.

1819 and with the Italian public in general in the decade that followed. Later, it was adapted and dismembered and then banished—all but the famous Act Two Quartet—into ill-deserved obscurity. The opera's problems are easy to rehearse: the enormous difficulty of the writing for the three principals, the *travesti* hero, and Rossini's re-use, in the final scene, of the music for the rondo finale of *La donna del lago* (Naples, October 1819). Yet in a performance as compelling as the one Pesaro has just mounted, these objections wither away. The massiveness of the piece and the close gearing of the *bel canto* style to music and psychology lends it, at times, awe-inspiring. Amid a welter of vocal display (brilliantly varied and linked to polyphonic writing of great virtuosity) one is struck above all by the fierceness of much of the music and by moments of erotic power, rare in Rossini. In the opening of the love duet in Act One, Ricciarelli was at her most alluring, vocally and physically. The opera has its static set pieces, such as Falliero's big Act Two scena, cavatina and aria (after which Horne received a ten-minute ovation in four carefully evolving postures) but even here one senses the opera's preoccupation with dangerous emotional excess being powerfully charted in Rossini's music. Contareno's cavatina, his great challenge to his daughter, must be one of the nastiest set pieces ever penned for the tenor voice, by turns vindictive, suave and wilful.

The new edition is by Gabriele Dotto, due for publication in the *Edizione critica*. Donato Renzetti conducted the London Sinfonietta Opera Orchestra, lending powerful support to the bevy of high-powered vocal talent. Interestingly, Ricciarelli made much more of the Rondo finale than Montserrat Caballé had done, in its original form as "Tanti affetti", in a recital the previous evening. Next year Pesaro hopes to hear Caballé in the title role of *Ermione*: Rossini's *Norina*, as one eminent Rossini scholar has challengingly put it. What she will make of it remains to be seen; *Ermione* is the greater piece but memories of *Bianca e Falliero* will be difficult to expunge.

Richard Osborne's *Rossini* is reviewed on page 1066.

The subject of *Liszt transcripateur ou la charité bien ordonnée* by Jacques Drillon (100pp. Arles: Actes Sud. Paperback 65fr. 2 86869 099 8) is the 351 works by Liszt which are catalogued as transcriptions, arrangements or adaptations.

Johann Sebastian Bach

Rossini in his time and ours

John Rosselli

RICHARD OSBORNE
Rossini
330pp. Dent (The Master Musicians). £14.95.
046031791

Rossini a master musician? Until not so long ago few in Northern Europe would have granted him the title. Shaw's centenary article in 1892 specifically denied him pre-eminence "even among modern Italian composers"; "a place in the hierarchy of the greatest modern masters, from Bach to Wagner", was "quite out of the question". Yet Shaw, at a time when Italian opera stood in deepest intellectual disfavour, more than most knew and loved Bellini, Donizetti, the early Verdi. The influence of German late Romantic music with its elaboration of means, its claim to universality and profundity, were overwhelming: affection for Bellini had to be excused, as for a well-loved pet left behind in the progress of musical evolution. Still less could be said for Rossini, an able man who had sold out to ignorant public and stooped to "claptrap". This was the low point of Rossini's fortunes. Little of his work was to be heard, even in Italy, apart from *The Barber of Seville* and the overtures (though in the old-fashioned Ireland of 1904 Molly Bloom was still singing the soprano part in the *Stabat Mater*). The tide turned between the wars, generally as part of the reaction against late Romanticism, specifically through the work of the conductor Vittorio Gui and the singer Conchita Supervia. Even then what were recovered were comic operas: *La Cenerentola*, *L'italiana in Algeri*, one or two more. Only in the past twenty years has another Rossini emerged, a composer mainly of serious operas with a strong claim to notice as a master of the lyric stage. The outcome is the appearance in Dent's Master Musicians series – a series roughly coeval with Shaw's judgment – of Richard Osborne's excellent study.

Three influences have brought about this result. First, certain musicologists have recovered lost texts and freed others from encrustation. Second, the Rossini Festival at Pesaro has shown these texts to be not just viable in the theatre but enjoyable. Third, long-playing records have opened them to the many who cannot get to Pesaro. It is an astonishing story: thanks to these combined influences we have, for example, *Un viaggio a Reims*, a delightful, at times adventurous work which until 1977 was not even known to survive in a full text, and was remembered if at all for the reuse of much of its music in *Le Comte Ory*. Yet the story falls some way short of triumph. Difficulties remain. The most obvious are difficulties of casting and vocal technique. Rossini, a Janus-faced artist, was not only the shaper of nineteenth-century Italian opera in its forms and larger structures, but the last of the *opera seria* composers in the eighteenth-century tradition; his most ambitious works, written for what was then the best-subsidized theatre in Italy, the San Carlo, Naples, exploited to the full the technical resources of that tradition,

and now set corresponding problems. Three leading tenors in *Oello*, all capable of the most arduous coloratura singing; at least one coloratura bass in each work – these are resources no longer to be depended upon. If it weren't for the invaluable Samuel Ramey the record companies would be hard put to find an adequate bass; not even they command a tenor one can imagine the original Naples audience accepting in such a part as Rodrigo in *Oello*, at once forceful, high-lying, and compulsorily beautiful in timbre. Performances are bound to be approximate.

If this were all, supply would in the end meet demand. Something more radical prevents Rossini even now from winning wholehearted acceptance: the neo-classical aesthetic he shares with a number of his immediate contemporaries. We respond to much of his work as we do to the history painting of David, the sculpture of Canova, the architecture of Sir John Soane: with admiration, but little intimate enjoyment. This has to do at least as much with things wanting in us as in them. We cannot engage fully with an Apollonian ideal of detached formal beauty; ideal beauty we can take only when, as in *Così fan tutte*, it lives audibly at risk from the Dionysian impulse within.

Osborne indirectly confirms this when he adopts Susanne Langer's category and calls Rossini's operas, whether formally comic or serious, examples of "serious heroic comedy". They embody, he writes, "comedy as a vehicle for expressing vitality, continuity, and harmony in human affairs however strong the potential for disorder in those affairs may be"; the comic spirit that informs them precludes "the need to search out the inner lives of individual characters". Elsewhere, it is true, he points to an "almost morbid sensitivity to suf-

fering" at work in, for instance, *La Cenerentola*. This seems less obvious than the "notable capacity for detachment" he also finds there. Obsessive and manic-depressive elements were indeed at work in Rossini's personality, not only in his prolonged period in the dumps from 1837 to 1855 but also – masked in layers of irony – in the flourishing years before and after. Like a good neo-classicist, however, Rossini submerged them in music whose impersonal accomplishment appears as a smiling norm.

"Propelled and coloured by harmonies which are as unobtrusive as they are ingenious, gloriously laid out for the voice, grand but never pompous, and not a moment too long" – Osborne's description of a forgotten cantata could be applied to many of Rossini's finest passages, such as the opening "scene of the shadows" in *Mosè in Egitto* (placed to less advantage in the Paris version given earlier this year at the Coliseum), the big trio in *Maometto II*, the women's duets and the tomb scenes in *Semiramide*. Perversely perhaps, modern sensibility seems to want something less self-complete, more beckoning to the unconscious.

Then, too, there are oddities specific to Rossini's period. The most obvious is the recourse to quick-march rhythms and martial scoring at what seem to us incongruous moments: the start of the cabaletta in Malcolm's entrance aria in *La donna del lago* is one of many instances. Close kin is the famous crescendo (another military manoeuvre, like overwhelming enemy lines), to be found in the same aria, and in situations as dramatically inapt in *Semiramide*. Edward Dent put down the military leanings of so much music of the 1790–1820 period simply to the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars: bands marching were to be heard continually. He may well have been

right. But *Ca ira* spirit of this music (once of Beethoven's included) no longer fits the twentieth-century experience of war; we are more likely to enter into the spirit of Haydn's *Paukenmesse*, caught up between fear of the Lord and clamant demands upon him for peace.

Still, the last word has not been said to Rossini or even by him. There is *Ermione*, a work almost unheard since 1819, highly spoken of by Osborne as well as by Italian scholars and now being recorded for the first time. There are critical editions still to be issued and opera still to be fairly tested in the theatre. As discovery goes on, Rossini will no doubt emerge as, more clearly as the chief architect of Italian Romantic opera (about a great deal of which he had ironic reservations) as well as of the Italian grand opera (with which Osborne suggests he was equally at odds; of his hated modern trinity, "steam, robbery, and the barricade", the first and last had some kinship with the laboriously educative displays of Meyerbeer). And although that makes him sound a historically significant rather than a living artist, there will always be moments when Rossini's music instils a headlong, unclouded delight: more welcome because unfamiliar in the everyday life of 1986.

Osborne's study has many penetrating remarks both on Rossini's life and on his work: the "serene anxiety" in the *Pelle Mele Solenne*, for instance, interpreted as a "belated Court composition". It deserves to be the standard account in English. A pity that in its present form it has many misprints, particularly in Italian names and phrases, as well as a startling attribution to John Donat the famous lines from *In Memoriam* about faith and doubt. These will surely be put right in a much-needed paperback edition.

Under the microscope

Gerald Abraham

WALTER FRISCH (Editor)
Schubert: Critical and analytical studies
256pp. University of Nebraska Press. £31.50.
0803219717

Walter Frisch has "assembled" a rather curious and ill-balanced collection of Schubert studies. "Of the twelve selections, five have been written especially for this collection by younger American scholars. Four others appear here in English for the first time. . . . Three additional essays were first published in American journals and have been revised or up-dated by their authors." He also warns readers that in Edward T. Cone's "Exercise in Musical Hermeneutics", "congeneric" analysis of the A flat *Moment musical*, Op. 94, No. 6, is amplified by an "extraneous" one, in which the purely musical process is taken as a representation of Schubert's feelings about his incurable venereal disease". (This should heighten our enjoyment of that pleasant, apparently harmless little piece.)

Another *Moment musical*, Op. 94, No. 3, is analysed in detail by Arnold Feil, who describes it as "a kind of game played on many levels with musical-rhythmic figures" and considers that

the most immediately striking aspect of inspiration in this composition is to be sought more in its qualities of motion, in its gestural dimension, than in the realm of melody and rhythm, where the word "inspiration" is usually applied. . . . One might say that the broken quarter notes have the quality of pure process; the basic rhythm is so severely limited that its uninterrupted pulsation is not actually perceived as a basic "motion" at all. The continuous pattern in the left hand, avoiding any rhythmic profile and articulation, as well as any distinct quality of motion, thereby constitutes a thread running through the composition, a "filo", along which the component phrases appear to be strung.

The most substantial contribution – though the shortest – is Carl Dahlhaus's "Sonata Form in Schubert: The first movement of the G major String Quartet, Op. 161", a translation of an article published in *Musica* in 1978. Dahlhaus has one the finest musicological minds of our time and, avoiding commentary on the more obvious features of the movement, he throws out remarks which stimulate thought. For instance,

The wealth of motive relationships in Schubert is as appropriate to a sonata form that tends toward variation cycle as it is to Beethoven's dialectically developmental forms. In fact, the affinity to a series of variations can be confirmed by appealing to the aesthetics of reception: the more intricate the structure that grows out of motive relationship, the simpler the form that constitutes the supportive framework. It is precisely the simplicity of a succession of variations that renders comprehensible remote relationships that would scarcely be discernible in a rhapsodic development section, because in a variation one expects certain connections to occur at certain points. The elements of the fourth variation of the principal idea in the G major quartet . . . would hardly reveal their origin if both the principal [sic] of variation and the incorporation of characteristics of the "Introduction" had not already been impressed upon the listener by earlier variants.

Another valuable contribution comes from Joseph Kerman: his contemplation of "A Romantic Detail in Schubert's *Schindler's Lied*", good though it is, is hardly new, since it appeared twenty-four years ago in *Musical Quarterly*. The "detail" consists of two bars at the beginning of "Ihr Bild", consisting simply of two eighth notes, one B flat, forty years

before, Heinrich Schenker had asked himself why Schubert "sounded the same note *non* when it would have been perfectly possible to have simply held it through two bars". Schenker answered his own question:

To repeat each note in slow tempo, and what is more to repeat it in this manner after a rest, amounts to "staring" at it, as it were; and in doing this, we feel ourselves wonderfully transported to the side of the unhappy lover, who stands "in dark dreams" staring at the picture of his beloved. With him, we too stare at the picture.

This is very subtle, but it does remind the irreverent English reader of Lord Curzon's head-shaking in Sheridan's *The Critic*. Kerman himself is more sensible, going on to examine Schubert's other concise piano introductions: the twice-resolved appoggiatura chords at the beginning of "Am Meer", the "griety appoggiatura" illustrating "the chill wind rocking the poet's boat" in "Die Stadt".

Another essay, William Kinderman's on "Schubert's Tragic Perspective", harks back to "Ihr Bild" as "one of the most sensitive and powerful examples of tragic reminiscence in Schubert's Lieder", with its "reinterpretation of the single note which acts as a focal point for the voice throughout". And Theodor Georgiadis skilfully uses "Über alle Gipfel" as a sort of microscope through which to examine such questions as "to what degree an outstanding composition is compatible with a poem that is complete in itself. . . . In what way does the music of a Lied exhibit characteristics independent of the poem? What is the relationship of the composition to the poem?"

One weakness of the book is the editor's failure to delimit and diversify fields; for instance, David Lewin's essay on "Image and Background in a Schubert Song" ("The relationship of musical structure to textual imagery") is followed by an examination of "Structure and Expression in a Schubert Song" ("The relationship between structure and expressive meaning in music") by Anthony Newcomb. The song in both cases being "Auf dem Fluß". The editor himself contributes an excellent study, "Schubert's 'Nähe des Geliebten': Transformation of the Volkstümlichkeit and the Volkstümlichkeit", and Lawrence Kramer ends the volume with a general survey of "The Schubert Lied: Romanticism and Romantic consciousness".

A mystical musicologist

Simon Karlinsky

NEIL CORNWELL
V. F. Odoevsky: His life, times and milieu
417pp. Athlone. £25.
0485112795

"There are writers whose fate makes one gasp in astonishment: how could it have happened that the new contemporary readers know neither their names nor their writings?" With these words the Soviet literary scholar Yevgenia Klin began the introductory essay to her 1959 edition of selected stories and novellas by Prince Vladimir Odoevsky. A contemporary and friend of Pushkin, Gogol and Lermontov, who all regarded him as their peer, Odoevsky (1804–69) was a major figure on the Russian cultural scene between the 1820s and 1860s. His highly original tales of the supernatural, which made him the Russian counterpart of E. T. A. Hoffmann and Edgar Allan Poe, were much appreciated by Russian writers, readers and critics of the first half of the nineteenth century.

Odoevsky also wrote anti-utopias, which in our century have been included in collections of early science fiction, and humorous stories of social satire. His two big novellas, "Princess Mimi" and "Princess Zizi" (the titles come from minor characters in Alexander Griboedov's another friend of Odoevsky's – comedy *Gore ot uma*), with their sharp analysis of how the minds and characters of upper-class women could be warped by the artificiality of their upbringing, give Odoevsky a modest claim to be the earliest Russian writer with what is today called a feminist consciousness. His one book-length literary work, *Russian Nights*, available in English translation, is a series of philosophical dialogues interspersed with brief fictional episodes. In it Odoevsky expounds his anti-rationalist, anti-utilitarian outlook derived from such idealist Western predecessors as Swedenborg and Schelling. The philosopher Friedrich Schelling was for Odoevsky the Christopher Columbus of the nineteenth century who discovered "the hitherto unknown continent" – the human soul, a concept which in our day would be conveyed by "psyche".

Odoevsky's idealistic philosophy, combined with his interest in the occult and the rejection in his dystopian stories of all forms of social engineering based on materialist views or economic theories, turned against him the entire dynasty of radical-utilitarian critics who dominated Russian journals from 1840s to the end of the century. The outcome was that Odoevsky's fictional writings were little read or studied between the time of his death and the death of Joseph Stalin. This neglect has obscured not only Odoevsky's influence on his younger contemporaries, such as Turgenev and Dostoevsky, but also his considerable contributions to several other areas of Russian culture.

The dialogues in *Russian Nights* and his other philosophical writings give Odoevsky a minor but incontestable place in the history of Russian thought. He was an important theoretician and practitioner in the field of elementary education. He wrote several children's stories which remain favourites to this day. And, as Neil Cornwell's biography well shows, Odoevsky "gave a vast amount of time and energy" to ameliorating the situation of the urban poor and of homeless or abandoned children, working for their cause quietly and effectively (as Anton Chekhov would do some decades later), rather than taking the path of histrionic confrontation (to which Leo Tolstoy would occasionally resort in his philanthropic ventures).

Vladimir Odoevsky's most durable achievement, apart from his creative writing, was his impact on the development of music and musical taste in his country. A musician and an amateur composer since childhood, Odoevsky was the first important Russian musicologist and music critic. As a teenager boy, Odoevsky was introduced to the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. He immediately placed this composer at the centre of his musical universe. A full decade before Mendelssohn's performance of the St. Matthew Passion restored to Bach the eminence he now enjoys, Odoevsky

demonstrated to his countrymen the greatness of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, especially of the difficult and supposedly illogical Beethoven of the late quartets. He described repeatedly the sublime beauties of *Don Giovanni*, the only Mozart opera performed with any regularity in Russia at the time, even though he believed, as many nineteenth-century critics did, that the opera should end with the final ensemble which Mozart wrote should be left out as supposedly redundant and distracting.

Because the opera-going public of St Petersburg and Moscow loved the art of the Italian bel canto, as exemplified by Rossini's *Tancredi*, Bellini's *Norma*, and Nabucco by the young Verdi, to the exclusion of any other kind of opera, Odoevsky fought a prolonged and ultimately successful journalistic battle to vary this repertoire with some productions of Mozart, Weber and, in the 1860s, of Wagner. His anti-Italian opera crusade may seem absurd now, but in his time it was an important and badly needed undertaking. When the St Petersburg Opera commissioned Verdi's *La forza del destino* in 1862 and gave it a lavish première (for which the composer was imported and paid an exorbitant sum), while allotting skimpy budgets for productions of Mozart and of Russian operas by Glinka and Serov, Odoevsky was so incensed that he characterized Verdi's new work as a "polka in four acts". Some of the neologisms Odoevsky coined in his efforts to break the bel canto hegemony are still remembered: *vzbeleni'sia*, "to become mad after listening to Bellini", by analogy with *vzbeleni'sia*, "to become enraged after ingesting herbane" (*belena*: the still common phrase "Did you have too much herbane?" is the Russian equivalent of "Have you taken leave of your senses?"); or *verdianina*, which likens Verdi's music to some kind of edible animal flesh, on the pattern of *telatina*, "veal", or *kuriatina*, "chicken meat".

As a close associate of every notable Russian composer of his time, Odoevsky was involved in the birth throes of Mikhail Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* and *Ruslan and Ludmila*, Alexander Dargomyzhsky's *Rusalka* and Alexander Serov's *Judith*. After the premières of these operas, Odoevsky published analytic essays on them, explaining to his sometimes incredulous compatriots their originality and importance. At the end of his life, Odoevsky met Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov and heard their early compositions. He died with the knowledge that the future of Russian music was in good hands. Odoevsky also studied Russian folk music. He pointed out the inappropriateness of harmonizing Russian folk-songs in the familiar Western major and minor modes and of reducing their rhythmic complexity to the usual three-four or four-four time of European music. Mussorgsky's operas and, in the twentieth century, Stravinsky's *Les Noces*, bore out the justice of Odoevsky's objections and proposals in this area.

Odoevsky's versatility and the diversity of his interests have proved daunting to literary and cultural historians. The only book-length study in Russian is Pavel Sakulin's *From the History of Russian Idealism: Prince V. F. Odoevsky*, published in 1913. A treasure trove of useful information on Odoevsky and his time, the book is only the first volume of an unrealized two-volume work. Its emphasis is on the intellectual trends of the period, with the result that the ostensible protagonist, Vladimir Odoevsky, keeps disappearing from the text for long stretches.

With the revival of interest in Odoevsky in the Soviet Union in post-Stalinist times, there has been a tendency to compartmentalize his writings. The musicologist Grigory Bernandt has edited an important volume of Odoevsky's essays on music and published articles about his contacts with various composers. The pedagogical writings were taken over by Soviet specialists on theories of education. During the last decade there appeared a small Soviet plea of dedicated Odoevsky literary scholars. Their essays and commentary for new editions of his fiction are usually well-informed and perceptive. But these scholars are handicapped by the compulsory requirement to ignore Odoevsky the mystic, the admirer of the medieval alchemists and the Romantic investigator of the human subconscious

and to emphasize the nationalist and the satirist.

Neil Cornwell has been publishing articles on various aspects of Odoevsky since 1975, and has now produced what is surely the most comprehensive study of Odoevsky ever attempted. The book is, above all, a feat of synthesis. The "life, times and milieu", mentioned in the subtitle, do not begin to cover the range of information that the book encompasses. The biography of Odoevsky takes up only the first twenty-eight pages. His literary milieu is addressed in the last of the book's six chapters, where his encounters with and/or his influence on thirteen Russian writers, among them Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy, are examined.

Between the biography and the milieu we find detailed and well-documented chapters on Odoevsky's literary writings, his philosophy, his involvement in music (including a fascinating sub-chapter on his personal contacts with Franz Liszt, Hector Berlioz and Richard Wagner) and his role as an educator. In Chapter Five, "Odoevsky and Tsarist Society", Cornwell undertakes voluntarily something that Soviet literary scholars are forced to do: to decide whether Prince Odoevsky, a direct descendant of Rurik, the earliest known ruler of Russia, was "reactionary" or "progressive" within the framework of his society (incidentally, what other form of Russian society existed in the nineteenth century except the "tsarist" one)? At the end of the last century and during the first decade of Soviet rule, he was mostly seen as a reactionary mystic. His present-day Soviet champions tailor his views to the requisite "progressive" dimensions – whatever that term may mean in the Soviet Union of the 1980s. Cornwell's unprejudiced examination of the issue convinces at least this reader that placing a figure as complex as Odoevsky on this particular Procrustean bed will add little to our understanding of the man or his writings. The book ends with an exhaustive bibliography of everything ever written by and about Odoevsky.

Sir Isaiah Berlin is undoubtedly right when he says in his foreword that Cornwell's book "is exceedingly well written". The few cavils I can make all stem from the fact that Cornwell has so thoroughly immersed himself in his Russian sources that he occasionally writes in Russian, though using English words. "The first description of tennis [in Russian literature]", says Nabokov's Pnin in the novel that bears his name, "occurs in *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy's novel, and is related to year 1875." Poor Pnin does not realize that the Russian verb which can mean either "is related to" or "dates from" has no exact counterpart in English. Cornwell similarly cites entries from diaries of Odoevsky's contemporaries of which he says "relating to the 1840s" and "relating to 1837". When an opponent of Odoevsky is quoted as saying that "[in music] it is impossible to open anything new", only the reader who knows that the Russian *otkryt'* means both "to open" and "to discover" will understand the phrase.

Another minor barrier for readers who know no Russian is Cornwell's resolute maintenance of the Russian custom of identifying people by the initials of their given name and patronymic followed by the family name. But since English has no patronymic, the initials in A. S. Pushkin or F. M. Dostoevsky are not at all the same thing as the initials in W. H. Auden or E. E. Cummings. A friend of mine who knows no Russian, faced with a book bearing the title *V. F. Odoevsky*, assumed that it must have been translated from the Russian. And indeed, isn't Alexander Pushkin more natural in English than A. S. Pushkin? The same fidelity in transcribing from the Russian led Cornwell to spell familiar German names, such as Wilhelm, Leopold and Elsa as Vil'gel'm, Leopold'd and El'sa. The music critic known to Western musicologists as Hermann Laroche appears in the book as G. A. Larosh.

But these minor objections are, as already stated, cavils: Neil Cornwell has produced a definitive, detailed and beautifully organized book on Vladimir Odoevsky. There are not too many books in English on other, more famous, Russian nineteenth-century writers that can be compared to Cornwell's in scope and overall achievement. Scholars who have until now regarded Odoevsky as a minor or peripheral figure will have to think again and think hard.

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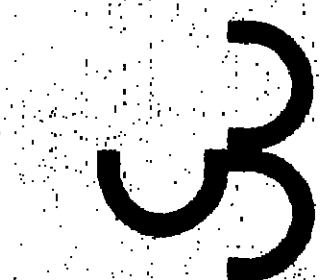
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SANDER L. GILMAN
Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-semitism and the hidden language of the Jews 461pp. Johns Hopkins University Press. \$38.50.
0801832764

When, for two centuries, the Jews of Germany applied themselves to acquiring German culture, they were trying to prove their humanity to their sceptical fellow countrymen, not merely their absorption of knowledge and manners. They were spectacularly successful in the short run, in that they contributed substantially to that very culture which their enemies claimed they could never grasp, while in the long run they failed so utterly that their history has come to an end.

The seventeen essays in *The Jewish Response to German Culture* span the entire epoch of Jewish integration (or near-integration) into German life, from the emancipation to the "final solution". They include discussions of some outstanding figures of the Jewish community, such as Moses Mendelssohn, the "father of emancipation"; Berthold Auerbach, the author of popular village tales; Hermann Cohen, the neo-Kantian philosopher; and of historical developments (ranging from the varieties of assimilation to what Shulamit Volkov, in a revealing essay on the relation of German Jews to the new immigrants from Poland, calls the "dynamics of dissimulation"). One reads these pieces with the frustrating awareness that they are essays about a dead culture, but with the paradoxical difference that quite a few of its survivors are still among us and can recall it.

The contributors include some highly respected older specialists, such as Moses Mendelssohn's biographer Alexander Altmann and

the Israeli historian Jacob Katz, as well as a number of younger scholars. Inevitably, the quality of the contributions is uneven, and there is some overlapping of subject-matter: for example, three of the essays contain some analysis of Richard Wagner's rejection of "Jewish" music. The volume fittingly ends with an article by Sybil Milton outlining the disarray in the archival material dealing with modern German-Jewish history. For readers who have some familiarity with the subject, most of these papers will be informative and stimulating, but they are too academic and specialized to serve as an introduction to the history of German Jewry.

Sander L. Gilman, who is by training a specialist in German literature but has written widely on cultural and medical history, presents in *Jewish Self-Hatred* a broad panorama of antisemitism, in the course of showing how the experience of ostracism becomes internalized as self-hatred. Focusing on speech and language, Gilman considers material ranging from the Reformation scholar Johannes Reuchlin's defence of Hebrew books to contemporary American fiction. The thrust of the argument is that the outside world saw Jews as having a secret language (originally Hebrew, but later a variety of other ways of communicating among themselves) which Gentiles found threatening. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as there were ever more and ever wilder speculations about the damaged personality and biology of the Jews, they came to be seen as habitual liars, deceivers, and destroyers of values, whose speech and, by extension, whose writings, served no other function than self-interest and the corruption of their neighbours. Their tendency to be multi-lingual, instead of being an asset, became a liability: a foreign, "Jewish" accent undermined the speaker's credibility. To the extent that Jews absorbed this image of themselves, language became a central problem. They were damned in the very act of adapting to the speech of their surroundings, and attempts to overcome the handicap often involved the adoption of negative images of themselves. Trying to exorcize the "bad" Jew

in themselves put them into a "double bind", in use Gilman's favourite expression. The psychoanalytical thrust of Gilman's own views is unmistakable: self-hatred, he suggests, is a neurosis that can be cured and that has changed since the establishment of the State of Israel, with its associated image of a new, fighting Jew. Gilman deals not so much with the facts of Jewish history as with Jewish self-perception; with Jews of fantasy, one might say. Fantasy, however, includes the medieval sources of pogroms and the sorry record of modern antisemitism with its pseudo-scientific underpinning.

Gilman's volume has the great merit of a quite unusual breadth of reference. His earlier works on the making of stereotypes (*Difference and Pathology*), and on images of the black (*On Blackness without Blacks*), enable him to place antisemitism within a broader, comparative context of racism. The approach adopted in another of his previous works, *Seeing the Insane*, is continued here in his treatment of both the quasi-medical claim, made in the psychological literature, that Jews are more prone to be mentally ill than Gentiles, and in his analysis of the complex psychoanalytic structures devised by Jewish psychoanalysts as they came to terms with their own Jewishness.

Yet some caveats must be registered. While Gilman's central theme helps him order his heterogeneous material, it has the drawback that it subsumes too many cultural phenomena under the category of the Jews' presumed special speech. Gilman would have strengthened his argument by asking what forms of Jewish self-criticism are constructive, and what responses to antisemitism are objectively justified. As it stands, he is predisposed to dismiss all Jewish self-analysis and infighting as self-hatred. In addition, he uses German and English-language material to the virtual, but unacknowledged, exclusion of the French. This is a serious omission, first because the theoretical basis of modern antisemitism is to a large extent French, and second because the most articulate group of post-war European Jewish writers is French.

Theodore K. Rabb

JONATHAN I. ISRAEL
European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism 293pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £25.
019 8219288

The integration of Jewish history into the general field of European history seems at last to be under way. Despite the monumental achievements of the subject's nineteenth-century pioneers (notably its Rankes—Graetz and Dubnow) and their successors, those twentieth-century exponents of the vast scale, Baron, Schollem and Roth, it has remained a sidelight, a seeming non-essential like the study of clothing styles. But the past few decades have witnessed an astonishing elevation to magisterial status of many social groups previously regarded by historians as fringe figures. Illiterate villagers, simple clergymen, women, even beggars and criminals, have come to be seen not merely as interesting in themselves—the antiquarian's argument—but as shedding light on the larger issues of an age. If such former pariahs can come to centre-stage, could the Jews be far behind? Not if their rich documentation and historiography could attract the attention of scholars in command of the broader field, which is exactly the crucial qualification that Jonathan Israel brings to this book.

He is by no means the first to meet the requirement. Kellenbenz and others have written distinguished studies of both Jewish and general history. But *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism* is path-breaking in that it attempts to look in both directions at once: to understand not only how European political and economic developments affected the Jews, but also how the latter shaped the former. In two areas, in particular, the results of this investigation are striking.

First, official policy towards Jews, and the

role it permitted them in the fiscal and economic well-being of a state, is used to measure the strength of early modern central governments and their mercantilist and absolutist ambitions. Israel's most original contribution is to demonstrate this connection across a broad variety of régimes, to trace its rise in the last third of the sixteenth century, and to explain its persistence and eventual decline over the following century and a half. Attitudes towards Jewry become the touchstones of princely ambition.

Second, Israel demonstrates that, during this formative period of international capitalism, Jewish financial and trading skills proved essential to economic advance. Their unique network of contacts throughout Europe, the Middle East, and eventually the Caribbean, enabled their leading entrepreneurs to assemble large amounts of capital, control certain trades, and provide military supplies more efficiently than any other group. As a result, they oiled the wheels of a new economic order in its early days, and thus helped to give that order its final shape. In economics as well as politics, therefore, the Jews were anything but marginal in the seventeenth century.

These two arguments are laid out with a wealth of detail, based on dozens of monographs of local history, stretching from Sweden to Portugal. Israel's achievement in mastering and organizing this literature, together with occasional archival research of his own, is remarkable. Occupying the first four-fifths of the book, this comprehensive account of rapid political and economic change over two centuries should become standard reading for all historians of early modern Europe.

Having given us over two hundred pages of thickly documented information, ranging from demography to welfare institutions, Israel takes on intellectual life in a single, inevitably thin chapter. It is little more than a catalogue, and does not produce the solidly rooted arguments of the preceding pages.

Israel is determined to label the period from

roughly 1720 (until perhaps the nineteenth century, though this is unclear) a "decline". It certainly witnessed profound changes in the distinctive equilibrium achieved before 1720, which had given Jewry an unprecedented prominence in European life. But the events thereafter were no less marked by achievement, and are properly defined as a shift in Jewish society and culture, not a decline, unless the eclipse of Sephardi by Ashkenazi Jews is assumed by definition to have been a derogation. By Israel's own account, Poland-Lithuania's Jewish population more than doubled between 1700 and 1750; elsewhere, the setbacks of the Dutch Sephardi community have to be balanced against the growth of Ashkenazi Jewry in Georgian England—a subject on which he is strangely reticent. And the rise of Hasidism—also unmentioned—belies the charge of falling vigour. It is important to suggest, as Israel does, how very different Jewish life, and its place in European society, had become by 1800 (Mendelssohn and the Rothschilds get a quick reference, the *salonnieres* and Solomon Maimon do not); but the effort is marred by the attempt to give the shift a polemic and even moral tinge.

Then, in an extraordinary conclusion, gratuitous assaults on Fernand Braudel and the unnamed Henry Kamen merely emphasize how unnecessarily harsh are the criticisms Israel directs at his predecessors. This kind of rhetoric, which here goes so far as to accuse historians who have long struggled with the concept of secularization of deliberately neglecting the waning influence of Christianity, merely undermines the force of Israel's achievement. Throughout the first four-fifths of his book, one could have wished only for a somewhat clearer, less dense exposition; for a few maps (which are sorely missed), and for small improvements having to do with chronology and other details—all essentially trivial matters. But the last fifth is miscellany; it tarnishes what is otherwise a major accomplishment.

Revolutionary ends

Tony Judt

FREDERICK KRANTZ (Editor)
History from Below: Studies in popular protest and popular ideology in honour of George Rudé 408pp. Montreal: Concordia University. \$20.
088947009 X

DAVID PINKNEY
Decisive Years in France 1840-1847 235pp. Princeton University Press. £21.50.
0691054673
FRANÇOIS FURET
La Gauche et la Révolution française au milieu du XIXe siècle 317pp. Paris: Hachette. 119 fr.
2010114078

Marx et la Révolution française 279pp. Paris: Flammarion. 100fr.
2082111547
DONALD REID
The Miners of Décazeville: A genealogy of deindustrialization 333pp. Harvard University Press. £21.25.
0674576394

For most of today's students of the French Revolution the relevant historiography begins with Georges Lefebvre. The better-informed will have read Ernest Labrousse and scratched the surface of Mathiez and perhaps Aulard. But there it stops. The Great Historiographical Debates have swirled around the contributions of Lefebvre and his successors to the social understanding and interpretation of the years 1787-95, and the predominant sub-text has of course been the wider argument concerning the plausibility of a Marxist account of the metahistorical significance of these events. Even those who would vigorously deny any direct interest in Marxism as project or method are caught up in the flow—Anglo-American historiography may lack the direct relationship with politics which so enlivens the profession in France but it has been no less concerned to take up the same debates.

Thus *History from Below*, a collection of essays honouring the voluminous output of George Rudé, is predictably focused upon the role of the people in history, what Eric Hobsbawm in his contribution calls "grassroots history". And although the subject-matter of the essays varies enormously (and the quality likewise) they share a common enthusiasm for taking seriously the aims and actions of the *menu peuple* in the past. This, together with an admirably economical style, was always the hallmark of Rudé's own work. Nor do all of the contributors display the rather dated emphasis upon the crowd and its demands which, innovative in its time, has become perhaps something of an end in itself for some of Rudé's more uncritical admirers. But in a festschrift for a scholar whose sympathies with a rather Leninist reading of social revolution were never disguised, such emphases are unsurprising.

The impact of the Lefebvrian hegemony is all the greater for being evident even in the distinctly non-argumentative little book by David Pinkney. All that Pinkney wishes to say is that the 1840s were a watershed period in French economic and cultural history. There is much evidence for this and he marshals it plausibly, if a trifle monotonously. His case would be even stronger if he had avoided the temptation to include in his definition of "significant" developments mere pointers to future events—thus the 1840s saw the "beginnings" of concern with the training of professional administrators, a concern which "finally blossomed" in the creation of the Ecole Nationale d'Administration in 1945! Of greater interest is Pinkney's emphasis on the disjunction between French economic development and political institutions. It is his account of the latter, in the 1830s, as "alien grafts on a hierarchical society" which shows how much he, too, is operating within the manichean inheritance of this sub-discipline. Implicit in his narrative is the account of the French Revolution as socially problematic, generating outcomes incompatible with its "true" nature.

The progressive departure from the Marxist consensus in the Parisian intelligentsia over the past decade has contributed to some revised thinking about all this, just as, symbolically, it has led to the work of Lefebvre and Soboul which

secured the historical underpinnings for Marxist philosophers of an earlier Parisian generation. There is a growing interest in liberalism, generously understood to cover everything from Tocqueville to the charms of the Californian market economy. And out of this there has emerged some very thoughtful work about the historiography of the French Revolution in its pre-Marxist heyday.

Pre-eminent in this move has been the prolific François Furet, whose work with Denis Richet in the 1960s first laid out an alternative map of the Revolutionary moment. In the two books reviewed here he has written lengthy introductory essays to collections of primary material; in one case the writings of Karl Marx on and around the subject of Revolution in France, in the other some excerpts from the furious debate aroused in the last years of the Second Empire by Edgar Quinet's study of the French Revolution. Together with his little study of the work of Augustin Cochin (in *Interpreting the French Revolution*, 1981) they form a challenge to the orthodoxy of his *marxisant* peers comparable to and perhaps more enduring than that offered long ago by Alfred Cobban.

Some of Furet's observations will be familiar to even the most sympathetic of Marx's critics. Although Marx never wrote a major work on the Revolution itself, his whole *oeuvre* can quite plausibly be read as an engagement with the problems it posed for him. But the nature of these problems altered subtly in the course of Marx's career. In his earlier work he is taken up with the Hegelian dilemma surrounding the Revolution's failure to generate a historical State—there was a contradiction between the Revolution's essence and its forms which vitiated its humanist ambitions. Thus the Revolution is the moment of the (self-contradictory) birth of the modern State. In his later years Marx was less concerned with the Revolution's ambitions (and thus its outcome) than with its true nature (and thus its origins). Its roots in the society of the *ancien régime* determine its character—it is a bourgeois revolution because it is the outcome of a development within society whereby the bourgeoisie were rising to

domination. The State and the political arrangements which result cease to be in conflict with its universalist aspirations and acquire their necessary identity from the civil society of which they are the product.

There are two difficulties with this. The first is purely logical in nature. With 1789, as in his more detailed studies of 1848-51, Marx is a subtle political analyst—his account of the Second Republic with reference to conflicting "fractions" of the bourgeoisie was original and compelling. But the social content of the events, like the ascription to the Revolution of bourgeois characteristics, hinges on postulates about the social and economic mutations of the eighteenth century in the run-up to 1789. Yet Marx never studied these social mutations, any more than he investigated the social content of the bourgeois fractions whose existence he proposed. Instead he deduced their nature and existence from the very political events they are supposed to explain.

The second difficulty is historical and lies at the centre of Furet's own criticism of the Marxist account. Why, in Pinkney's words, are the early nineteenth-century institutions of France "alien grafts"? Why are there so many different attempts to "end" the Revolution? Why, in other words, does the classical bourgeois revolution take such politically polymorphic forms? One answer has been to propose that the French Revolution merely opened the way to modern social and political forms, and cannot be expected to have itself determined one form as historically superior to another. In other words, the French Revolution was nothing more nor less than the genesis of the modern world. In that case, what does it mean to describe it as "bourgeois", short of investing that term with universalist and pan-social content?

An alternative line of reasoning, that the Revolution specifically transformed and created the modern State, seems manifestly true. But given Marx's own account of what a state is, for him to follow Hegel and place the State at the centre of his account of modern history would be to make nonsense of much of the rest of his work. We are left with Furet's first con-

from *The Word Joy*

I am searching here in the fog
for something escaped from the fog
having heard steps in the distance
and the voices of passers-by.

Perhaps I imagined it, the sunset brush
on the rough canvas of earth,
a golden evening oil
on fields and woods; but it looked
like the lamplight on a kitchen table.

Each day, perhaps, you might replace
the stitches in the severed net—
thus, in the distances of space,
to sew up, star by star, the night.

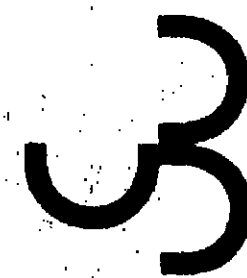
These bonfires in the February gardens
lit less for tidiness, you would say,
than to help spread the light,
can we ourselves manage no more
than this with our secret heart?

Show me the man who has found certitude
and shines in peace like the last
peak to fade at twilight, never
winning under the weight of night.

PHILIPPE JACCOFFET
Translated by Derek Mahon

en 1987 christian bourgeois éditera

theodor w. adorno
gilles aillaud
hannah arendt
jean-christophe bailly
djuna barnes
walter benjamin
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CHRISTIAN BOURGOIS EDEUR

POLITICS & STRATEGY

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Hélène Carrère d'Encausse
translated by George Holoch

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1986. 272 pp.
bibliography, appendix £26.75 (hbk) £14.25 (pb)

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clusion: that the central difficulty in understanding the French Revolution lies not in a social account of it, which we now have (and perhaps to saturation) and which is unproblematic, but in the political meaning we attach to that understanding, which we have no reason to read off from the social data themselves.

The younger Marx knew this instinctively. He also knew it because he was, like many of his contemporaries, a voracious reader of the emerging French historians of the great Revolution. It was from them, Guizot in particular, that Marx borrowed the notion that the Revolution was the product of the tensions in the *ancien régime* between the economic power of the bourgeoisie and the latter's political exclusion. The Revolution brought politics and the State into line with civil society (this, again, was a view widely shared by the liberal historians of the years 1830-50). What went wrong was that for reasons still dimly understood the Revolution of 1789 turned into the Terror and dictatorship of 1793. But matters were put right in 1830, from which point Thiers and other historians could postulate the commonality of the French and English experience of bourgeois revolution. Only when the rise and defeat of the Second Republic destroyed this cosy vision did Guizot, for example, reluctantly cease to dismiss 1793 as exceptional, contingent, and, like many of his liberal contemporaries, begin to despair of ever "ending" the Revolution.

Others, like Louis Blanc, read the same events identically, except that they inverted 1789 and 1793. The latter now became the central and necessary moment of the Revolution, albeit postponed for the time being. The Jacobin dictatorship, and the social classes for whom it was supposed to have functioned, became the meaningful event of the Revolution, which thus lost its roots in the eighteenth century and became the anticipatory vision of the future. But Marx was never quite so eager to abandon the bourgeois essence of the Revolution, because of its obvious centrality to his wider social theory, and he retained a closer affiliation to the analytical, if not the political, perspective of Mignet, Thierry, Thiers, Guizot and Constant. Yet he could not dismiss 1793

and everything that it stood for as merely contingent, accidental, unfortunate. However much he might agree, for example with Mignet, that the external wars had an unforeseeable impact on domestic politics, his whole intellectual *modus operandi* precluded seeing anything as historically important as the Jacobin dictatorship as marginal to the meaning of events. But what, then, did it mean? The clue lies in his more sustained attempt to explain the equally contingent fact of Louis Napoleon's coup – it became necessary to import purely political explanations into an otherwise social explanation of the nature of the State, and it is no accident that the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx's best piece of political analysis, is profoundly at odds with almost everything else he offers *ex hypothesi* on the subject of political change.

For a more consistently political understanding of the same set of difficulties, Furet turns us to the writings of Edgar Quinet, Michelet's friend and near-contemporary. Quinet's 1865 study of the Revolution aroused passionate debate within the anti-Bonapartist and Jacobin community partly because of his interest in religion and partly because he broke new ground by combining radical political commitment with a moral critique of the Terror. It is the latter which has aroused Furet's interest. Quinet shared the view of his predecessors to the extent of being deeply committed to the democratic goals of the Revolution, and seeing 1789 and 1793 as distinct and different moments whose unity was not historically required. But, unlike Guizot, he saw 1789 not as an end but as a fragile beginning, not as the product of *ancien régime* society but as the first chance for a democratic and liberal polity. His account of 1793 differs from that of Thiers or Mignet (and Michelet) in that he rooted the Terror firmly in the political forms of the *ancien régime*, insufficiently undermined and rejected by the early achievements of the revolutionaries.

In effect, Quinet takes up Tocqueville's commentary on the Revolution, but from the perspective of existential commitment (which is why his Jacobin friends so resented it). And as a Jacobin of the 1860s he was best placed to grasp the truly original insight that the idea of

1793 as integral to the Revolution had done profound damage to the radical political discourse of nineteenth-century France. It was, by 1865, fast becoming a left-wing truism that genuine freedom could only be achieved via a period of dictatorship (and, if necessary, terror). Nor, Quinet argued, would it do to condemn the Terror of 1793 while denying it in the present: this was both morally untenable and politically dangerous – and, as Furet notes, he has been proven right.

Quinet is largely forgotten, submerged in the events which followed fast upon the publication of his book. But his very neglect is instructive. The Marxist account of the Revolution, so readily grafted on to the Jacobin one of which Quinet was an internal critic and which was institutionalized at the Sorbonne with the appointment of Aulard in 1886, could not engage with Quinet's arguments just because they were political. The experience of organized labour in France (nicely illustrated in Donald Reid's monographic study of the industrial town of Decazeville in the Aveyron) suggested that even if the Third Republic completed the political cycle of Revolution in France it left unresolved the social inequalities and conflicts whose coming 1793 was said to have proclaimed. And just as the Jacobin moment had revealed these "contradictions", so the Jacobin method would resolve them.

It thus came about that the Marxist account of the Revolution mattered less for its capacity to explain the past (at which task it was at best derivative, at worst self-contradictory) than for its success at "creating" the future, or promising so to do. Somewhere in between there was lost the sense that the lack of concern with the political outcome of revolutionary actions might be a dangerous price to pay for success. Only in the declining years of our century has this simple intuition again achieved wide attention, largely as a result of the ironically successful export of the Jacobin experience to lands where the local 1793 has lacked the moderating drag of a 1789. Once again, the historiography of the French Revolution is keeping remarkably abreast of politics, further ironic testament to Michelet's paean to the history of France, "dont la particularité est précisément d'être universelle".

and all related legislation was to try to achieve ideological (not necessarily cultural) unity around the concept of Republic, itself now indiscoverable from *Nation* and *Patrie*.

But to rally all Frenchmen to "1789" meant to unhinge a large minority of them from monarchist and, more problematically, ecclesiastical loyalties. Attacking the Church was a fraught and risky operation, as Ferry recognized once he came to power. The able politician in him, as in Gambetta, readily granted that "manger du curé" was no way to advance the cause of unity around the Republic. As J.-M. Mayeur, A. Prost, and P. Chevallier show, Ferry instead placed his hope in the long-range strategy of reconciling Catholicism – "ce grand phénomène français" – to the Republic.

But there remains an ambiguity in the meaning of the term "reconcile". It is one thing to sunder the religious from the political; it is another to invest (or try to) the political with the sacred. These authors make clear that Ferry also hoped to win over Catholics to the Republican form of belief. Along with others of his generation he overlooked the religiousness of his own secular and positivistic project. Raoul Girardet captures it well in his elegant comparison of Ferry with Guizot. With all that united the two men, "it is the term 'Republic' which separates, cuts, and excludes them from one another, and this in the measure that it is itself charged with an ever-growing load of sacralization".

For the powers that assembled this colloquium, as for some of its participants – successors to the sternly *laïc universalistes* of the *fin de siècle* – there is a tendency to forget that the Republic's attempt to, in Ferry's words, "realize humanity without God and without belief" has only half succeeded. The ghost of belief can still, on occasion, get out of hand in this most technocratic of French republics.

In the eyes of the city and the gods

John Gould

JEAN-PIERRE VERNANT and PIERRE VIDAL-NAQUET

Mythe et tragédie en Grèce ancienne deux
299 pp. Paris: La Découverte. 180fr.

21071 15908

MARCEL DETIENNE

Dionysos à ciel ouvert

121 pp. Paris: Hachette. 48fr.

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SIMON GOLDBILL

Reading Greek Tragedy

302 pp. Cambridge University Press. £25

(paperback, £7.95).

0521 305837

Nothing, presumably, could be less intended than an echo of Hollywood in the title of *Mythe et tragédie en Grèce ancienne deux*; certainly the articulateness of J.-P. Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet is a world away from *Mad Max III* or *Rocky IV*. None the less the echo is there and it prompts the question: is this a remake of a box-office favourite that we see before us? The answer must be no, and yes.

The English version of *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece (I)* appeared only in 1981, but the French original was published in 1972 (reviewed in the TLS, August 11, 1972) and the impact of the book was immediate and widespread. It generated a real sense of excitement in a wide range of readers at the prospect of a wholly new set of insights into Greek tragedy, insights which were more intellectually satisfying than the rather naive and often insensate readings of the genre that were then largely the current fare. When Simon Goldhill writes, in his new book, *Reading Greek Tragedy*, of criticism "pitched... far below the level of critical awareness or sophistication required by the modern reader who approaches the plays from disciplines other than classics", one knows too well what he means. Vernant and Vidal-Naquet offered something different. In fact their strengths were not (and are not) particularly literary; like so much critical writing from France, the perceptions of their book were primarily methodological and philosophical in cast, a response to patterns of thought rather than to the resonances of the text. Above all, a perception of the models in terms of which the tragic fictions were shaped; the model, for instance, of the scapegoat in Sophocles' *King Oedipus* or of adolescent initiation rituals in *Philoctetes*. In bringing these models to light, they were able to demonstrate the interaction between traditional myth and contemporary reality that they saw as distinctive of Greek tragedy. And they were able to show too how the form of the plays, with its focus on conflict of ideologies and ambiguity of meaning, could be seen as an expression of a particular phase in the social and political development of ancient Athens – the "moment tragique".

These insights inform their new book also: in the opening essay of the book Vernant writes of tragedy, "it is the city making theatre of itself, putting itself on stage in front of the assembled citizens". What is Dionysiac about tragedy, Vernant goes on to suggest, and specific to the genre, is the "otherness" of the hero, his belonging to an "absent" world, a world that no longer exists, and the blurring and shifting of the boundaries between illusion and reality that result for the audience from the enacted fictions of the tragic theatre.

One could argue with that: as Plato's Socrates makes the rhapsode Ion acknowledge, the bewildering co-presence of the "absent" and fictional world of the past and "present" reality is as old as Homeric epic. But the sensitivity of the "school of Paris" to deep structures of thought will lead to some stunning insights. There is a brilliant essay in their new book on the (certainly unconscious) structural inversions which make Herodotus' narrative of the Cypselid tyrants of Corinth a precisely detailed mirror-image of the myth of Oedipus as shaped by the imagination of Sophocles; and in several essays Vernant makes use of a recurring concern in his recent work with masks and masking and their role in ritual and religious iconography to focus the idea of tragedy as presenting an image of man and his experience of himself under the eyes of the "other" ("Thou, God, see me"). The idea of man seeing him-

self being seen unseeing is rich in interpretative possibilities, not just for *Bacchae*, a play to which Vernant himself applies the idea in the last essay of the book, but also for the mocking, but not ultimately destructive, ironies of Sophocles' *Oedipus*, above all if we bring into play also, as Goldhill does in a rewarding chapter, the further "seeing" of the audience.

Sensitivity to structures and to models is not only the source of the strengths of *Mythe et tragédie deux*: it is also the source of its weaknesses. Vidal-Naquet, developing an idea which figured already in the earlier book, describes the role of the chorus in Greek tragedy as being the expression of "the collective truth, the truth of the mean, the truth of the city", as

well understand that Vernant is an outstanding orator and Vidal-Naquet (thought of by his confrères as peculiarly "English") a political figure noted for his defence of the truth against the suppressive tendencies of the State.

Marcel Detienne's voice is distinctively the voice of the poet, metaphorical and allusive. Detienne's Dionysus is recognizably of the same family as Vernant's, but he spreads himself more widely. He is an explosive god, a god of spurring liquids (wine and blood) and leaping limbs, a god whose initiations seemingly demand a passage through bloodshed, madness and pollution, a "visitor" whose visitations are sudden and bewildering. Readers of *The Gardens of Adonis* will not be surprised to



"Figurehead, Porto Raphael, 1982", from *Metamorphoses*; Greek photographs, by Daniel Schwartz with an introduction by Peter Levi (180 pp., with 118 duotone photographs. Thames and Hudson. £18. 0500 541191).

against the "excess" of the heroic figures of the tragic fiction, "separated" from the city and represented by the actors; the voice of the chorus, "though it does not have the first word, always, through the mouth of the coryphaeus, has the last". The model of the chorus as representing the mature wisdom of the democratic city is an obviously seductive one in the context of the overall view of tragedy that shapes both books: it fits the scheme beautifully. But Vidal-Naquet is too honest and too good a scholar not to see that it will not do: after his persuasive development of the idea, he immediately (and rightly) unsays it all in the following paragraphs. In fact, not only is it the actors, not the chorus, who are paid and equipped by the city collectively, but the language of the chorus is further distanced from the language of the city than the speech of the actors, and the chorus itself is composed almost without exception of those whom the democratic city has defined as marginal and, in the last two cases, excluded from the controlling voice of "the people": old men, women, slaves. And the exceptions prove the rule: the choruses of *Ajax* and *Philoctetes* are adult males, "of the city", perhaps, but dependent utterly on the status of the hero and (in *Ajax*) reduced almost to incoherence by their panic reaction to the hero's fall from honour. They are instructive exceptions too: both choruses are the crews of the hero's ship, and their behaviour, like the opening speech of Eteocles in Aeschylus' *Seven*, suggests an interpretation of the "ship of state" image significantly closer to Plato than to the democratic ideology expressed in Thucydides' words, "the city is its men".

None the less, *Mythe et tragédie deux*, like its predecessor, is a book to be unreservedly welcomed for its progressive unfolding of ideas which have proved consistently fertile in new perceptions and for thinking that is in the best sense individual as well as collective, for if the work of the "school of Paris" speaks a single language, it also has distinctive voices. One can

structures that are read from it.

However, Detienne's exploration of the associative world of Dionysus, like Vernant's, brings to light new and significant connections and, it seems, leaves little out. Little, but not nothing. Like other recent commentators (Charles Segal, for example) Detienne is everywhere sensitive to the Dionysiac associations of the vine, with its burgeoning tendrils and heady fruit, but strangely silent on the counter-image of the vine, namely ivy; strangely, because it is surely the structural (or rather anti-structural) resemblances between vine and ivy that cause both to be seen as emblems of Dionysus. There are further associations to be explored here.

A remark of Vernant's, "the tragic message when understood is precisely that there are zones of opacity and incommunicability in the words that men exchange", is three times quoted by Simon Goldhill and gives a clue to the lineage of *Reading Greek Tragedy*, a title which declares also the book's indebtedness to post-structuralist criticism and to the work of Barthes, Derrida, Kristeva and Hartman in particular. Goldhill's book offers what the blurb describes as "an advanced critical introduction to Greek tragedy" in the form of a linked sequence of chapters on the city and its language; on men, women and relationship within the city; on knowledge, mind and character; and on theatre as theatre. Woven, for the most part successfully, into these chapters are readings of a number of major dramatic texts (the *Oresteia*, *Antigone*, *Oedipus*, *Ajax*, *Hippolytus*, *Electra* and *Bacchae* among them).

The argument of the book is subtle, in large part persuasive, tenaciously pursued and well presented. One of Goldhill's chapters is called "The City of Words", and it is with words and meanings, with the "slippage" between "words and the world", and with the struggle to control and "appropriate" meaning, that he sees the figures of tragedy as centrally concerned – and so too the critics whose "readings" seek equally vainly to control the meaning of the tragic texts: "as the different characters of the trilogy appropriate the language of *dike*, so too the different critics, repeating the play's dynamics of conflict, appropriate the language of the *Oresteia* to arguments about social justice".

On the face of it, this is a "thin" reading of Greek tragedy, which narrowly centres on the exchange of language as the prime concern of the genre. But it leads Goldhill to perceptive readings of several of his chosen plays: in writing of Euripides' *Electra*, for example, he rightly explodes argument about the nature of Euripidean "realism" by a sensitive response to the play's "intertextuality", its simultaneous manipulation of the narrative tradition and of the established conventions of the Greek theatre; "the drama does not construct a neat and bounded opposition between a 'world of myth' and a 'world of reality', but sets in play a variety of 'reality effects', different 'illusions of reality'... *Electra*'s entrance in rags is upsetting not because it represents reality but because it represents reality in a way

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A harmony par hasard?

Jonathan Barnes

MARCEL CONCHE (Editor)
Héracclite: Fragments
496pp. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
280fr.
213 0395783

which transgresses the conventions of dramatic representation, indeed the representations of reality constructed elsewhere in the play." That is well said, and represents a larger response than one confined to words alone, but the dangers of his approach to tragedy lie in the over-intellectualization of the tragic effect that sometimes results: to see tragedy and sophisticated philosophical dialectic as "parallel investigations of the position of man in language and society" (my italics) is to displace the experience of tragedy.

But my quarrels with Goldhill are small quarrels, some perhaps even giggling: I find myself recoiling from his use of "Frenghish", when I encounter words like "discourse" and "difference" spelt and pronounced as if they were English words but with French, not English, semantic fields ("long live the difference" somehow lacks meaning as well as resonance). For the most part this is a highly stimulating and original book which develops a polemical argument persuasively and with courtesy (even in his insistence, against what I take to be a misreading of Oliver Taplin, that "performance does not efface the textuality of drama"). Even if it is not quite, as the blurb describes it, what "all those involved in the teaching and study of Greek drama in whatever context" have been waiting for, it is none the less a book to which one will want to return for its insights as well as its challenges.

A last question remains. The methodologies of Vernant, Vidal-Naquet, Detienne and Goldhill are powerful tools for uncovering the specifically fifth-century bc resonances of Greek tragedy: what do they offer for the realization of the timeless meanings of the tragic experience? That is a question that Vernant himself addresses in an essay on the "trans-historicity" of tragedy in *Mythe et tragédie grecs*; his answer (structured in Marxist terms) points to the tensions and conflicts that go to constitute the "necessary finiteness" of the human condition in all societies, all cultures: "tragedy carries in itself a kind of wisdom, a theory concerning the illogical logic that presides over the order of our activities as men". I am not sure that H. A. Mason, in his recent book, *The Tragic Plane* (reviewed in the TLS, September 5, 1986), has not said as much, or more, with what some might see as a methodologically naive empiricism. In the last resort, perhaps, the sensitivity of the reader (a sensitivity displayed by all the authors of the books here reviewed) is more significant than the critical methodology.

Heraclitus was the Riddler, the Obscure. He won his surnames in antiquity, when his writings could be read in full: today the riddles and the obscurities are fragmentary, known to us from a handful of brief citations, paraphrases and allusions. But the world of scholarship is peopled by Delian divers, and each year welcomes—or deplores—a new attempt to elucidate the Heraclitean philosophy.

The latest scholar on the springboard is French. Marcel Conche's book scrutinizes some 140 short texts, each of which receives a page or two of close commentary. The exegesis is primarily philosophical and although Conche does not offer "a syncretical account of Heraclitus' system", he hopes that "the articulations and the coherence of his thought will emerge plainly enough".

This Heraclitus is a successful seeker after metaphysical truth. His fundamental insight has it that "all things are one", that "each thing-event is one with the contrary thing-event". Not "thing" but "thing-event" (for the world is everything that comes about, the totality of happenings. Thus "the Real is at bottom Becoming: Being is only an appearance: the unity of opposites is the ground of Becoming"). But this ceaseless and subtle flux is not disorderly: events observe due measure, and nature is a "self-constituting, self-regulating, and self-restoring order". The true discourse of philosophy — Heraclitus' metaphysical truth — reveals and describes the universal laws of unending change.

To discover these laws, the philosopher needs observation and thought — but an observation and a thought "liberated" from every aspect of subjectivity. The mind must be freed both from the shackles of personal desires and self-interest and from the fetters of communal superstition and traditional prejudice. "To liberate oneself for philosophy implies a deep and radical break with the group and with others, ie with oneself." The philosopher rides out alone, he despises *hoi polloi*, he rejects the trumpery pretensions of science, he mocks the empty mummeries of religion. He knows that life is brief and that after life

there is nothing; for in the cosmic ocean of events his own minnow pleasures and pains are of no size and no significance. That is his tragic vision.

None of this is startlingly novel, nor does Conche claim originality for his general interpretation of Heraclitus. But there are some new things: the texts are differently selected, differently arranged, differently numbered; a few of the fragments are given utterly fresh readings; and of course there are very many new points of detail. But although there are good things to be found among Conche's numerous pages, the bad things outnumber the good.

Conche is capricious in his textual behaviour. He states that "the doxographical tradition not only is of little value compared to the fragments but has actually played a negative part" in that it has distorted Heraclitus' own views. In fact, however, he invokes arbitrarily selected items from the tradition: from time to time — and quite properly — doxographical evidence is adduced to support the interpretation of a fragment; more importantly, many of the texts Conche cites as fragments are not fragments at all, but doxographical paraphrases. (By a "fragment" Conche means a text from which, with certainty or probability, Heraclitus' actual words can be recovered. He finds 136 such fragments: I doubt if the true figure is more than half of that.) Take, for example, texts 10, 11, 13, 14 and 85 (B 71–75 in Diels-Kranz). Conche prints these five separate fragments. In truth they form a continuous passage in Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, a passage in which Marcus urges himself to remember Heraclitus' thoughts. (Marcus was a Stoic and the Stoics regarded Heraclitus as one of their intellectual ancestors.) Marcus does not purport to quote Heraclitus; he is writing in his own style and language. But it is surely absurd to print Marcus and suppress Diogenes Laertius and Sextus Empiricus and Hippolytus. And it is culpably misleading to print the Marcan passage out of context and in five separate snippets.

Philosophical exegesis requires a delicate balance between judgment and imagination: an interpreter of Heraclitus needs a bright fantasy, but he must not fall into a fever. Conche's fantasy is nothing if not fevered. A little illustration: "To go all things are beautiful and good and just, but men have taken some to be unjust and others to be just" (111 = B 102). What are we to make of this relatively lucid sentence? Well, "to god" means "from a cosmic standpoint", and Heraclitus intends to say that from this standpoint even ugly things are beautiful. But this is not said in a Panglossian spirit — on the contrary, it implies the tragic thesis that the ugly is as real as the beautiful. Moreover, the fragment gives priority to the notion of beauty over that of justice; for Heraclitus has no moralistic leanings. And the reference to beauty makes us think first of the cosmos — natural objects are not, in fact, said to be ugly and ugliness only emerges when we take the human standpoint. "Nevertheless", as Dostoevsky rightly says, "children are never ugly, and that fact enables us to understand that the ugly itself, if there exists any ugliness, can be beautiful".

There are many ways of describing that sort of thing. A polite one is: hogwash. The philosophical waywardness of Conche's interpretations matches his philological capriciousness, and both characteristics are, I suspect, manifestations of an underlying optimism. For Conche has an extravagantly optimistic view of the scope and nature of our evidence for Heraclitus' thought.

His optimism has another noteworthy manifestation. Conche believes that the 136 fragments he has collected "form a system Taken separately they often remain obscure or ambiguous. Taken at once separately and together — all together — they constitute a harmonious whole of admirable coherence, to which each brings its own note and its distinctive tonality". Let us grant (what many deny) that Heraclitus' book purveyed a systematic philosophy: what chance is there that Conche's fragments themselves form a system and themselves proportionately represent the lost whole? The texts have survived by hazard. They are preserved by some forty different authors. It requires a profound faith in the efficacy of the Invisible Hand to believe that a "harmonious whole" would be produced in this way from such "distinctive tonalities".

The general criticisms which can be brought against Conche's book could with equal justice be brought against other recent work on Heraclitus. Much has been written, little achieved. A more dogged and less daring approach is needed. Scholars must train themselves in rigorous philological methods; they must control their imaginations with a sober judgment; and above all, they must recognize with Heraclitus himself that "you will not discover the truth even if you travel the whole road — so deep is its discourse".

his own constitutional ideals: "I know the young man's mind inside out. He values nothing more than the Commonwealth, respects nothing more than your authority, desires nothing more than the good opinion of honest men But Octavian, predictably, jettisoned Antony, and signed Cicero's death warrant. The orator, vain, timid and vacillating as he was, faced the triumvir's hit squad with courage and resignation. Thirty years later, when the young Caesar was the emperor Augustus, he came on one of his grandsons reading a work of Cicero. The boy tried to hide the book but Augustus took it from him, stood reading for a long time, and gave it back with the words: 'A real orator, my boy, and a real patriot too'. What makes the story worth repeating is not what the emperor said (he could afford to be magnanimous) but what the boy was afraid of. Even benevolent autocrats don't like to be reminded of what they have abolished."

If this is really the end of Shackleton Bailey's Ciceronian odyssey, then it is in every sense a worthy conclusion. In his biography, he invited us to value Cicero "not as statesman, moralist, and author, but as the vivid, versatile, glibly infinitely conversable being who captivated his society and has preserved so much of himself and it in his correspondence". Now, as Cicero himself would have preferred, he has done justice to the statesman too.

A new critical text of the tragedies by Seneca, edited by Otto Zwierlein, has been published by Oxford University Press. *Tragediae* (483pp, £10.75, 0 19 814657 4) includes an index, various appendices and a preface by Zwierlein in Latin.

No man is so dull as not to realise that if we doze over this crisis we shall have to endure a despotism not only cruel and arrogant but ignominious and disgraceful. You know Antonius' insolence, you know his friends and his whole retinue. To be slaves to libertines and bullies, foul profligates, gamblers, drunkards — that is the ultimate in misery joined with the ultimate in dishonour.

It took real courage to challenge Antony in his consulship, with Rome full of Caesar's veterans. We know Cicero's shortcomings all too well; we know (as he held), that the Republic he wanted to save was profoundly corrupt; but he saw his duty and did it — to risk his life for the rule of law.

In the end he paid the price. It is tragic to see him trying to fight fire with fire, using the young Caesar against Antony as if he shared

his own constitutional ideals: "I know the young man's mind inside out. He values nothing more than the Commonwealth, respects nothing more than your authority, desires nothing more than the good opinion of honest men But Octavian, predictably, jettisoned Antony, and signed Cicero's death warrant. The orator, vain, timid and vacillating as he was, faced the triumvir's hit squad with courage and resignation. Thirty years later, when the young Caesar was the emperor Augustus, he came on one of his grandsons reading a work of Cicero. The boy tried to hide the book but Augustus took it from him, stood reading for a long time, and gave it back with the words: 'A real orator, my boy, and a real patriot too'. What makes the story worth repeating is not what the emperor said (he could afford to be magnanimous) but what the boy was afraid of. Even benevolent autocrats don't like to be reminded of what they have abolished."

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Among the friends of God

Julian Baldick

MICHEL CHODKIEWICZ
Le Sceau des saints: Prophétie et sainteté dans la doctrine d'Ibn Arabi
231pp. Paris: Gallimard. 95fr.
107005986

A. POPOVIC and G. WEINSTEIN (Editors)
Les Ordres mystiques dans l'Islam: Cheminement et situation actuelle
325pp. Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. 190fr.
2713208440

ALEXANDRE BENNIGSEN and S. ENDERS WIMBUSH
Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union
195pp. Hurst. £16.50.
085050128

These three fascinating and important publications in the field of Sufism, Islam's main mystical tradition, all reflect work done in Paris, at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. They display formidable erudition and impressive scholarship, but are marred by a most misleading application of specifically Christian terms and concepts to Islam, where they are quite alien.

This fault appears in the very title of Michel Chodkiewicz's otherwise admirable book, *Le Sceau des saints* (based on seminars in which he was a guest speaker at the École), which is devoted to the subject of "sainthood" in the works of the Andalusian Ibn 'Arabi (d 1240), Sufism's greatest systematic thinker. Unfortunately, there is no concept of "sainthood" in Islam, as is clear from the materials which Chodkiewicz cautiously and meticulously introduces. He admits that the Arabic word for "saint", *qiddis* (from the root meaning pure, inviolable sacrosanctity) is employed only by Christian Arabs. Indeed, its use in a Muslim context would be unthinkable. Now it is essential to bear in mind that, as has often been noticed, in the Indo-European languages two originally distinct notions have long been confused: one of pure, inviolable sacrosanctity, and one of health-increasing force. Thus in English the terms "sacred" and "holy" are used interchangeably, and for many centuries our Continental neighbours have done likewise. In Arabic no such confusion exists. The veneration accorded to special men and women in main-line Islam depends not on any attribution of purity or sacrosanctity to them, but on their being credited with a large amount of health-increasing energy, *baraka*, literally "blessing", bestowed by God. Thus, if one is to use a Christian term, it should not be *sacred*, but *blessed*. There is no such thing as "canonization" in Islam, nor any institution which could serve for such a process.

Yet the mistranslation of a number of Muslim terms as "saint" continues to be perpetuated by many specialists. On examination the words turn out to mean "lord", "noble", "elder", "guide", and so on. The expression most commonly mistranslated as "saint" is the Arabic term *wali Allah*. That this means "friend of God" is clear from the huge corpus of Persian literature produced by Sufis who were bilingual in Arabic and Persian, in which the Persian word for "friend", *diyar*, is used to translate, to explain, and as a substitute for, *wali Allah*. (That the plural *awliya* does not mean "saints" is amply shown by Chodkiewicz's self-contradictory rendering of *awliya al-Shaytan* — "the friends of the Devil" — as "les saints de Satan".)

To be sure, as Chodkiewicz finely demonstrates, the word *wali* has other important connotations: it means "protégé" and both "client" and "patron" in the Roman sense. Indeed, in the use of the root *wly* to designate the temporal institution of clienthood in early Islam, obviously inherited from the Roman Empire, we can see the counterpart of its spiritual application. The friend of God is His protégé and client, and a patron and protector to lesser Muslims. Friendship did not mean what it means now, but, rather, a fine understanding of exact mutual obligations. The parallel with eastern Christian examples from late antiquity, well known from Peter Brown's work, is so close as to leave little doubt concerning historical continuity. It is precisely because the early Muslim mystics owe so much to their Christian

predecessors that we must beware of attributing to the former those Christian concepts which they did not assimilate.

That said, this is an extraordinarily good book about an extremely difficult thinker. Ibn 'Arabi was a very colourful personality, apt to resort to autobiographical accounts of visions, and in no doubt as to his own importance. He saw himself as the "Seal" (the "Sceau" of the title) of God's friends in Muhammad's community, as their ultimate and crowning glory. He also had a severely rigorous mind, in firm control of the awesome structures of his monistic system. His audacious paradoxes have dominated Islamic thought ever since, and provoked bitter controversies which still rage today.

Chodkiewicz not only knows the texts remarkably well, but also avoids and rejects certain errors of perspective common among other scholars. He rightly sees the rise of the "friends of God" and their veneration in the thirteenth century as forming part of a deliberate policy on the part of Muslim rulers, rather than as an independent, popular response to the Mongol invasions. He denounces the worst misconception — the opposition of an "orthodox" to an "unofficial" Islam — that pervades *Les Ordres mystiques dans l'Islam*.

This volume of papers by specialists at the École and elsewhere, edited by Alexandre Popovic and Gilles Weinstein, is devoted to Sufi organizations, as they are today and in the light of history. The members of the École show magnificent dedication in digging out the evidence, but their energy is misdirected by a peculiarly old-fashioned overview abandoned many years ago by the historians of Islam. They believe that there is, on the one hand, an "official" or "orthodox" Islam, and on the other an "Islam parallèle" or alternative Islam, constituted by the mystical tradition of Sufism. This theory is quite untenable. For several centuries chief Sufi "elders" have been publicly appointed by governments. Sufis have been as much part of the "establishment" as anyone else, and have flourished on state patronage. Sufi poetry has provided the principal element of "official" culture in the eastern Islamic world. The abuse of the word "orthodox" here must be seen as a classic illustration of the fallacy of its use in the study of religions. Islam is not a religion of theologians, and has no central authority to define doctrine. It is a religion of jurists (in effect, rabbis) and mystics, and many have been both at the same time. Any qualified lawyer can declare whether something is against Islamic law, so there can be as many versions of "orthodoxy" as there are jurists. Some excesses in Sufi behaviour (for example, artificial production of ecstasy in dancing, and extreme forms of self-mortification) have always been condemned, but in general the lawyers have usually seen Sufism as something to be regulated, not rejected. The Sufis, for their part, have always insisted on their respect for Islamic legality. Recent research has shown that their claims to early textual authority are just as good as those of the jurists.

A different use of the word "orthodox" spoils Marc Gaborieau's otherwise excellent survey of Sufism in India. He thinks that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Sufism was divided into "orthodox and heterodox orders". But the sources show rather a division between the Sufi organizations on the one hand, with leaders insisting on obedience to Islamic law, and libertine groups on the other, which were not called "Sufi" and should not be seen as "orders": a disorderly pursuit of hashish and pederasty was more their style. In practice there appears to have been a delicate symbiosis: there was plenty of interplay, and the stern Sufi master would have some dubious figures in his entourage.

Superb papers are provided by Klaus Kreiser and Fred de Jong. Kreiser shows how the Ottoman Empire enmeshed Sufis in bureaucracy and red tape in nineteenth-century Istanbul. In return, the State gave the mystics financial support without which their "lodges" could not have survived. It is significant that the percentage of the male population living permanently in these "lodges" was then about the same (2–3 per cent) as that studying in the law-colleges; a striking illustration of the balance, often deliberately sought, between the legal and the spiritual in Islam. De Jong

paints a similar picture for modern Egypt: the government has formulated rigid regulations to keep the Sufi organizations under control, and the latter have demonstrated their respectability by founding mosques of their own.

In general, the contributions by members of the École are of very high quality. Nicole Grandin points out that in the Sudan it has been normal for a Sufi man of letters to give instruction in both jurisprudence and the "path" leading to God. Indeed, in the spoken Arabic of the Sudan the very words used to designate jurists and members of the Sufi organizations have become confused. It is particularly pleasing to find Denys Lombard's well-informed survey of Indonesian Islam in the volume, since in recent years this field has been presented to a wider public in an influential, but superficial and markedly over-schematized, manner. Lombard, however, commits a common error in putting what is sexually ambiguous beneath the heading of local, indigenous contamination: the role of the pretty boy in the Indonesian Sufi organizations is anticipated in many an early Middle Eastern example.

The worst paper in the book is, as is sadly now normal, the most theoretical, and the one most loaded with Christian terminology. Fanny Colonna, in her presentation of Sufism in Algeria, concentrates on attacking colonialist attitudes. But her depiction of Islamic institutions in the forms of Christian ones is itself as colonialist as could be imagined. The distinction drawn here between the "lay" and the "clerical" is quite inapplicable to Islam, which has no clergy. The absurdity of using such language in a Muslim context is underlined by Western writers' application of the term "cleric" both to the jurists and to the Sufi leaders. Colonna talks, too, of "intégristes" — a term much used by French Catholics, who themselves have never been able to decide to whom it should be attached, so that it has had to be glossed "anti-modernist" to have any meaning at all. To try to transpose it to the world of Islam, as French journalists do, merely proves that it could designate almost any type of Muslim activist. We also meet the term "scripturalism", so beloved of social scientists working in North Africa. Adherents of religions usually claim to be concerned with scripture, just as anthropologists claim to study people.

Weinstein's postscript to the volume contrasts oddly with his preface. In the latter he confidently predicts that the book will consider not "official Islam", but an "Islam parallèle". In his concluding survey he is obliged to admit that several of his colleagues have insisted upon the absence of a particularly clear opposition between "legal Islam" and the "Islam of the brotherhoods". The answer is that Islam has always been a slowly evolved articulation of Jewish law and Christian devotionalism: the religion of the Muslims itself represents a gradual synthesis of diverse elements: rabbinical and ascetic, tribal and monarchical, urban and nomadic, academic and ecstatic. Behind the artificial antitheses of the social scientists lurks a dated, and now discredited, narration of the origins of Islam, in which the austere code of the desert preceded its later corruption by alien visionaries.

It remains to be asked precisely where the careful and empirically minded scholars of the École have found their dichotomy between the "official" and the "unofficial". It comes from a retired teacher at their institution, Alexandre Bennigsen, a distinguished specialist in the study of Islam in the Soviet Union. He has in turn taken it from Lucien Klimovich, the principal Soviet anti-Islamic propagandist of the Stalin and Khrushchev eras. To apply this schema to the rest of the Muslim world is unwise for various reasons. Little is known of Sufism in the Soviet Union. Bennigsen himself says that there it is very different from its manifestations elsewhere. In the Soviet Union the term "jurist" has a distinctive meaning: there are officials officially registered as such with the temporal authorities (though those jurists have sometimes been Sufis as well), while Sufi organizations are illegal. Naturally, Soviet writers tend to present registered religious leaders as models of respectability, and unregistered ones as esoterically inclined obscurantists. Bennigsen, in collaboration with S. Enders Wimbush, has just produced an extremely significant study, the first of its kind,

entitled *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*. I am inclined to accept its main thesis that Sufism in the Soviet Union now commands adherence on a very large scale, not so much because of the authors' presentation of their sources, which inspires considerable hesitation, but because the evidence of perspicacious pre-1917 observers would not lead one to expect otherwise.

Armin Vámbéry, a Hungarian who saw Central Asian Islam from the inside, disguising himself as a Sufi in the 1860s, stressed that it was absolutely unique, the laughing-stock of the Muslim world for its bizarre and exaggerated display of religious zeal. The worst possible bigotry, pedantic literalism and hypocrisy were displayed, while Sufism served as an excuse for an army of crooks to delude a gullible population. K. K. Pahlen, a Tsarist inspector in 1908–9, found a similar prevalence of heightened backwardness. Both noted that Sufi leaders had vast influence over their coreligionists. Surely a lot of this must survive today. Bennigsen and Wimbush appear to believe that it is in reaction to Soviet rule that Islam in this area has become dominated by Sufism; but this was already the case before the Revolution.

The authors approach their subject through the work of contemporary Soviet sociologists. There is an admirably balanced assessment of the latter's studies of religion by William C. Fletcher, who rightly suggests that their principal handicap, when approaching Islam, may well be the unconscious application of Christian categories. Bennigsen and Wimbush, when presenting the work of Soviet writers, repeatedly speak of "clergy" and "clerics". This produces chaos, since we cannot assess to what extent the so-called "unregistered clerics" are scholar-jurists, or Sufis, or both. Vámbéry said that many jurists, hating the Sufi masters as powerful rivals, presented themselves as members of Sufi organizations in order to have more sway over the public. Pahlen thought that in an assembly of seventy jurists between ten

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The end of the Ciceronian odyssey

T. P. Wiseman

CICERO
Philippics
Edited and translated by D. R. Shackleton Bailey
402pp. University of North Carolina Press.
£32.
807816574

In 1820 Charles Kelsall, classicist, architect and pamphleteer, in the course of a pilgrimage to Cicero's birthplace at Arpino, proposed that a monument be erected there, modelled on the Pantheon but with plate glass skylights. "To All the Biographers and Commentators of Cicero". No one could better deserve such a memorial than D. R. Shackleton Bailey. Over a quarter of a century has passed since the then Lecturer in Tibetan at the University of Cambridge produced a monograph with the modest title *Towards a Text of Cicero ad Atticum*. Since then, moving first to Michigan and then to Harvard, he has completed the staggering ten-volume text, translation and commentary of Cicero's correspondence — *ad Atticum* (1965–70), *ad familiares* (1977), *ad Q. fratrem* and *ad Brutum* (1980) — which earned the richly deserved accolade of the British Academy's Konyon Medal for Classical Studies in 1985.

"It is a hard saying, but I think a just one", he wrote in 1964, "that no edition is as good as it could have been, or as it ought to be, if the editor has not translated his text and commented on it, whether for publication or not." Commentary is not an easy matter when one's

author is an active politician deep in the day-to-day business of public life, for which his own works are practically the sole contemporary source. That is what makes the edition of Cicero's correspondence so indispensable for historians — the detailed notes and appendices which sort out the problems of sense, reference, and identification on which the justification of the editor's text depends. And often the translation is itself a commentary, economically giving the editor's solution of a textual or semantic dilemma without the necessity of a note.

Perhaps that is the reason why Shackleton Bailey's explanations have become progressively more laconic. I calculate that for every 100 pages of text and critical apparatus, there were 119.8 pages of commentary in the *ad Atticum* edition, 92.5 in the *ad familiares*, 88.7 in the *ad Q. fratrem* and *ad Brutum*. For the *Philippics*, even including the material published separately in *Harvard Studies* (1979) and *Philologus* (1982), the figure is about 30.3. Reasonably enough, no doubt, in that public speeches are by their nature more accessible, less often baffling to the modern reader, than informal correspondence. But in any case, this time the editor has set himself more limited aims: first to provide a future commentator (who should be a political historian) with "a textual and interpretative foundation on which to build", and second to make the speeches simply more accessible to students and to the general reader. Both these misleadingly modest purposes are brilliantly fulfilled.

Shackleton Bailey is not only a Latinist of very great distinction (I suppose there are two or three others in the world with whom he can

be seriously compared), but he also writes beautifully clear and elegant English. His biography of Cicero, produced in 1971 as a companion to the correspondence, is a delight to read, and his translations of the letters have rightly gone straight into Penguin Classics paperback. It is very appropriate that this handsome volume has been subsidized by the United States National Endowment for the Humanities, "whose mission . . . is to bring the results of cultural activities to a broad, general public". The *Philippics* deserve to be made available to a modern readership. The tradition of political oratory they represent is now a thing of the past, but their subject-matter, the defence of constitutional government against tyranny, is of perennial importance.

"You do not need me to advise you", Cicero told the Senate:

No man is so dull as not to realise that if we doze over this crisis we shall have to endure a despotism not only cruel and arrogant but ignominious and disgraceful. You know Antonius' insolence, you know his friends and his whole retinue. To be slaves to libertines and bullies, foul profligates, gamblers, drunkards — that is the ultimate in misery joined with the ultimate in dishonour.

It took real courage to challenge Antony in his consulship, with Rome full of Caesar's veterans. We know Cicero's shortcomings all too well; we know (as he held), that the Republic he wanted to save was profoundly corrupt; but he saw his duty and did it — to risk his life for the rule of law.

In the end he paid the price. It is tragic to see him trying to fight fire with fire, using the young Caesar against Antony as if he shared

his own constitutional ideals: "I know the young man's mind inside out. He values nothing more than the Commonwealth, respects nothing more than your authority, desires nothing more than the good opinion of honest men But Octavian, predictably, jettisoned Antony, and signed Cicero's death warrant. The orator, vain, timid and vacillating as he was, faced the triumvir's hit squad with courage and resignation. Thirty years later, when the young Caesar was the emperor Augustus, he came on one of his grandsons reading a work of Cicero. The boy tried to hide the book but Augustus took it from him, stood reading for a long time, and gave it back with the words: 'A real orator, my boy, and a real patriot too'. What makes the story worth repeating is not what the emperor said (he could afford to be magnanimous) but what the boy was afraid of. Even benevolent autocrats don't like to be reminded of what they have abolished."

If this is really the end of Shackleton Bailey's Ciceronian odyssey, then it is in every sense a worthy conclusion. In his biography, he invited us to value Cicero "not as statesman, moralist, and author, but as the vivid, versatile, glibly infinitely conversable being who captivated his society and has preserved so much of himself and it in his correspondence". Now, as Cicero himself would have preferred, he has done justice to the statesman too.

A new critical text of the tragedies by Seneca, edited by Otto Zwierlein, has been published by Oxford University Press. *Tragediae* (483pp, £10.75, 0 19 814657 4) includes an index, various appendices and a preface by Zwierlein in Latin.

and twenty at least were Sufi leaders.

Soviet sociologists, like their Western counterparts, express strong reservations about the value of questionnaires, but none the less depend upon them. Data gained through questionnaires, often administered in an atmosphere of hostility, from peoples long versed in the art of lying to representatives of the State, are hard to evaluate. In the North Caucasus the intensity of anti-Russian feeling among the Chechens and the brutal persecution (later denounced by Soviet writers) of which they have been the victims reinforce doubts about material collected in this way. Here the sociologists find that a very large proportion of the population is Sufi. However, allowance must be made for a phenomenon widespread in the Muslim world: the contrast between committed membership of a Sufi organization, with

devotion to spiritual progress on the road to self-annihilation in God, essentially an urban characteristic, and on the other hand tribal, inherited allegiance to a family of Sufi masters. With this in mind, one may suspect that in Central Asia Bennisgen and Wimbush's estimation of Sufism as comparatively weak in Uzbekistan is wrong: Vámbéry found that in the Uzbek towns, one-third of the inhabitants were actively committed to the mystic way (a surprisingly high proportion, by any standard).

The authors rely heavily upon an important study of Islam in Karakalpakstan, by Zhumanazar Bazarbaev, published in 1973. They extract from it a percentage of 11.4 "convinced believers" (for the population aged eighteen and above), among whom, they think, the Sufis are to be found. This they project on to the whole of Soviet Central Asia in order to

estimate the total number of Sufis there. They then assert that the age of the adepts is very difficult to ascertain, but note that Bazarbaev insists on the predominance of retired people. Against him they claim that Sufism attracts the young. Yet they fail to mention that Bazarbaev does give a breakdown by age: out of 234 "convinced believers" none is under forty-two, and 199 are over fifty-four. Compare A. Bennisgen and C. Lemerrier-Quelquejey, *Islam in the Soviet Union* (1967):

A recent enquiry carried out in the native quarter of Tashkent... shows that the majority of men and women aged 55 and over belonging to the lower strata of society are believers, although only 10 per cent of them scrupulously observe religious rites or attend regularly the Friday prayers in the mosques. Even those who are atheists or are indifferent to religion turn to it again when they reach the critical age of 55.

Fletcher gives similar statistics for mainstream Christianity in the Soviet Union, where it appears that children acquire religion from baby-sitting grandmothers, and then abandon or conceal it, avoiding the sanctions, such as expulsion from higher education, that hit young believers.

How much can be learnt, given such circumstances? The authors attack American colleagues for saying (wrongly) that Sufism in the Soviet Union must be insignificant because we have only "limited" data on it. Bennisgen and Wimbush assert that on the contrary the sources are plentiful and revealing. But elsewhere they, too, concede that the evidence is limited. Such contradictions, however, are to be excused in the work of pioneers, and we must be grateful to both writers for putting this intriguing subject firmly on the map.

Where all religions meet

A. M. Platigorsky

MIRCEA ELIADE
Briser le toit de la maison: La créativité et ses symboles
358pp. Paris: Gallimard, 110fr.
207 0706001
A History of Religious Ideas: From Muhammad to the Age of Reforms
Translated by Alf Hiltebeitel and Diane Apostolos-Chapadon
360pp. University of Chicago Press, £23.50.
026 204049

Mircea Eliade's kingdom - his dearly beloved central and south-eastern Europe - died long before he himself died (earlier this year), not only as a cultural and socio-political reality, but also as an aesthetic dream. But Eliade's persistent nostalgia for its cultural past is one of three themes that dominate *Briser le toit de la maison: La créativité et ses symboles*, a collection of twenty-four essays and reviews written between 1949 and 1985.

Eliade's vision of that past is one of a world of peasants and aristocrats, of manuscript memoirs and unrecorded legends, of genuine artistic elegance and inbred spiritual refinement, of cultural (pagan) variety and ecclesiastical (Roman or Greek) unity; of a world of confinement in space, and spontaneous creativity in time. The book's title refers to the roof which limits our individual as well as our cultural circumstances. The modern European cannot break the roof of his house, for he no longer has one, he has already lost his "sacred place", having bargained it away for time.

This is the book's second theme: *homo faber*, by the changed character of his activity, has gradually taken the place of natural, spontaneous time. What time creates in a million years he produces, by means of science and technology, in a year or less. But one cannot accelerate time indefinitely, and when it is eliminated, its role is assumed by *homo faber*, while *homo religiosus* recedes into eccentricity or fanaticism. Only a small number of "enlightened ones" still carry the torch of the Gnostic knowledge, the *philosophia perennis*. And strangely enough, though Eliade does not emphasize it, the religious elite of the present day consists mainly of those who investigate the phenomenon of religion, that is, of scholars and scientists, including the author. This, says Eliade, "reveals... a certain nostalgia on the part of scientists, philosophers and theologians, which reminds one of the 'hermetic illumination' of the seventeenth century"; and writing of the "metaphysical consequences" of the so-called "Gnosis of Princeton" (a circle of spiritually inclined and scientifically disenchanting scientists), he suggests that:

It is the latest conclusions of modern scientists: themselves the direct descendants of *homo faber*, who reactivate, on different levels and with different perspectives, the same fears, hopes and convictions that have dominated the world of *homo religiosus* from the very start: the fear of death or the destruction of life itself, the hope of conquering this fear by knowledge and ritual directed to one's post-mortem existence and, finally, a certainty of the immortality of the soul.

"All these," concludes Eliade, "must be interpreted for what they are, that is, as series of states of consciousness."

The third theme of the book is, of course, religious symbolism, Eliade's lifelong preoccupation and the focus of almost all his studies. According to him, the symbols are neither forms of religious consciousness, nor manifestations of religious meaning. On the contrary, they constitute the real content of every religion. He even goes so far as to assert the primacy of symbols over religion itself, and that all different religions are the different "languages" or discourses in which one and the same symbolic core is variously manifested. Thus understood, religion is conceived as a universal invariant that pre-exists all actual religions, seen as variants of it. This principle applies equally to individual religious experience. The Clear Light described by Eugene Ionesco is the same as that seen by dying persons in the Tibetan Book of the Dead. This is not because the playwright, then a precocious youth, had the same "state of consciousness" (as William James would undoubtedly have suggested), but because all dying persons find themselves in the presence of one and the same symbolic entity, irrespective of the differences in their creeds and mental states.

The long-delayed third volume of Eliade's *History of Religious Ideas* covers the period between the fourth and the seventeenth centuries. This, however, is not a straight historical description of religious beliefs, ideas and institutions, but rather an attempt to interpret various successive as well as synchronic "religious creations in their proper spiritual horizon". In this Eliade remains true to himself when he says: "It is the man who creates the religion, though in creating it he follows patterns that are uncreated and inherent in the nature of religion itself."

This is all well and good when one is dealing with pre (or non-) historical religions, for in them the patterns reveal themselves in their pristine purity, still unblurred by historicity, and with their symbolic core still inseparable from its immediate mythological (that is non-theological) interpretation. But Christianity is far more difficult to tackle, for not only is it historic both in its origins and in the chronology of its development, but it is also historical in the sense that "the process and the end" of history constitute a very significant aspect of Christian self-awareness and one of the foundations of Christian theology. Is it possible, as Eliade maintains, to treat a "historic and historical" religion in terms of eternal, ahistorical patterns, structures and tendencies? One might try to answer this question by taking two concrete "religious creations" - one from a "natural and pagan" religion, the other from a great "historical" religion - and reduce both to one and the same pattern. Such a reduction will be incomplete and theoretically inconsistent until we have discovered and, when possible, defined the type and character of the conscious contexts of these "creations". For instance, Num, the God of Heaven of the Samoyeds, is opposed to the Old Evil One, or God of Death, as Good is opposed to Evil in Manichaeism. Both religions could be reduced to a pattern of "ethico-ontological dualism". In the Samoyed case, however, the good God does not know of the existence of the Evil One; and the Evil One is equally unaware of God's existence; in the second case, the Good is perfectly aware of itself as good and of the Evil as evil and vice versa. Therefore, these two creations are irre-

ducible to one and the same dualistic pattern of Evil versus Good, for there exists also another dualism, conscious versus unconscious, which has to be taken into account because unless the creator is conscious of his creation, no ethical dualism is possible.

Eliade, though not himself a structuralist, used the term "structure" or "model" of religious phenomena which cannot be conscious of themselves, for if they become self-conscious they cease to be what they were. But in so doing he speaks from his own religious position, which can recognize the pre-historic, namely that which lies outside history, only by virtue of the fact that he himself has already "fallen into" history. When dealing, on the other hand, with a theology (Christian or Muslim) or a religious philosophy (Buddhist or Vedantist), we must recognize that we are dealing with an object of investigation that has developed terms for its own self-description. This self-knowledge has to be taken as an objective fact, side by side with our own concepts and methods. An investigator of religion (even if he is an atheist) cannot escape his own religious self-awareness, in which the idea of god or gods, of grace, belief, rite, faith, sin, salvation (where applicable) assume their particular meaning according to religious tradition, irrespective of whether he is part of this tradition or rejects it. The very notion of religion is given to him in his own tradition even before he starts his investigation of another religion or of religion in general. From Eliade's own point of view his methodology is, as it were, scientific, whereas from mine it derives from his religious position.

With Christianity (as with Islam), when one "falls into history" and realizes that the religion's pristine structures are pre-historic (that is, pre-Christian), one inevitably falls into theology too, which conceptualizes those structures. But even theology cannot prevent them from surviving also in the form of "fringe" mystical movements, both anti-theological and anti-historical. It is with these that Eliade feels himself more at home, and not

with theologies. Yet in Christianity we also have other kinds of fringe movement, in which Christian historicism finds its more extreme expression and eventually becomes an end in itself, sometimes at the cost of religion itself. Here Eliade changes sides and allies himself with a Christianity threatened with destruction by evil forces, which he tries to account for by adducing spurious parallels from outside Christianity: for example, "One must wait until the twentieth century to witness a similar phenomenon, notably the enthusiastic welcome, all over Western Europe, of a millenarianism of eastern origin, Marxism-Leninism" (my italics).

It is in the later chapters (which have nothing to do with Christianity) that Eliade is most in his element, and where his insights are, as usual, brilliant and penetrating. He turns in conclusion to Tibetan Buddhism and tries to account for its enormous complexity by recourse to the notions of "synthesis" and "syncretism". This syncretism, which is indisputable in this case, exists on two levels. There are a number of Tibetan traditions the sacred texts (mainly Tantrist) of which explicitly acknowledge, or even describe, the fact of their own internal heterogeneity; but at the same time, when endeavouring to explain a complex religious phenomenon synchronically - as it presents itself to the explorer at a given stage - one can only do so in terms of a synthesis. So these two notions can be reduced to, or derived from, the investigator's own consciousness of other people's religion.

These last two books - apart from their immensely rich factual material - must be regarded as a final exposition of Eliade's ideas about Religion and religions. For, as an author, he did not progress, step by step, from one idea to another, towards an integrated theory of religious consciousness and symbolism. On the contrary, he seems to have had all his ideas at the very beginning. In the early 1930s, so that his books appear not as landmarks in the development of his thinking, but as successive moments in its concretization.

For a broad readership

Alastair Hamilton

BERNARD O'KELLY and CATHERINE A. L. JARROTT
John Colet's Commentary on First Corinthians: A new edition of the Latin text, with translation, annotations, and introduction
348pp. Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, \$20.
0866980563

John Colet's *Commentary on First Corinthians* was first edited and translated into English by J. H. Lupton in 1874. In collaboration with Catherine A. L. Jarrott, Bernard O'Kelly has now provided a new translation. It is published together with the Latin text, based on the autograph manuscript in Cambridge University Library and collated with the transcription by Colet's amanuensis, Peter Moeghin, at Emmaus College, Leuven. The introduction clearly discusses the danger of presenting Colet as an

exegetical innovator and of judging him in the light of our knowledge of Erasmus and Thomas More. He emphasizes, rather, Colet's debt not only to the Pseudo-Dionysius but also to Aristotle and the medieval commentators. At the same time he shows that Colet's commentary was intended for a far broader readership than the academic and clerical public addressed by Thomas Aquinas, and he stresses Colet's attention to the historical circumstances in which the Epistle was composed; his treatment of St Paul as an individual personality, and the predominantly symbolic and soteriological character of his exegesis.

After each quotation taken from Kenneth and Valerie McLish's *Longman Guide to Bible Quotations* (415pp. Longman, £10.95; 0 582 763 616) is a description of the biblical setting, its meaning, the subsequent linguistic use and any other useful information. There are over 1,000 quotations which are taken from the Old and the New Testaments and the Apocrypha.

Making sense of America

Anthony Pagden

JEAN-PAUL DUVIOLS
L'Amérique espagnole vue et rêvée: Les livres de voyages de Christophe Colomb à Bougainville
489pp. Paris: Promodis.
2903181462

The often, as it seems to us, uncertain response of Europeans to the discovery of America has long been a subject of historical bewilderment equalled only perhaps by the bewilderment of the first explorers themselves. From the end of the fifteenth century, with the appearance of a scientific historiography concerned overwhelmingly with the origins of the modern world, the discovery of America and the new sea-route to India came to be seen as, in Adam Smith's words, simply "the most important events in the history of mankind". Columbus's voyages had a place, together with the invention of the printing press and the heliocentric theory, in an extended history of man's progressive understanding of nature and, in Michelet's famous formulation, of his discovery of himself. This view became something of an orthodoxy for the Romantics and has never seriously been challenged. For the author of this lavish book, Columbus is still the recognizable harbinger of modernity, standing "à la frontière entre le Moyen Âge et la Renaissance".

But just how so historically significant an event was to be interpreted has varied with the cultural and political sensibilities of its historians. The initial enthusiasms which marked the work of Robertson, Raynal, Michelet and Humboldt were based on the twin notions of the superiority of Western culture and the civilizing power of commerce. Modern historians, however, have been more inclined to recognize that, in the end, Montaigne was probably right in viewing the discovery as a calamity, in which whole cultures were bargained away for a handful of trinkets.

As a consequence many have now turned their attention to the problem of the relationship between the discoverers and the discovered, to what, after Lévi-Strauss and Foucault, has come to be called the problem of "the other". This is the subject of Jean-Paul Duviols's book. It is, as he says, primarily about recognition. The central question it seeks to answer is how did the early travellers to America cope with the mass of bewildering information with which they were confronted? "Connaitre", as he says, "a été avant tout reconnaissance". But recognition could only be achieved through what Duviols rather misleadingly calls "filters" and "prejudices". No observer can hope to make sense of the wholly new except in terms of pre-existent strategies for description; and these are only "prejudices" in the sense of what Gadamer, and

Heidegger before him, called the "fore-structure of knowledge". Such strategies include those possible worlds and impossible beings: the Earthly Paradise, the Amazons, the Giants, the Hyperboreans, the Fountain of Eternal Youth and so on which were rapidly translated to the New World immediately upon its discovery. As Duviols points out, Columbus himself claimed, albeit only briefly, to have discovered the Earthly Paradise at the mouth of the Orinoco, and persisted in his search for Cannibals - which he found - and the Amazons, which he did not. But they also included a

wide range of prior anthropological and psychological hypotheses which were subject to radical transformation during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Since Duviols has divided his material up according to subject-matter, the processes by which this transformation took place are largely obscured. To place, for instance, Sir Walter Raleigh beside the great eighteenth-century Jesuit ethnologist Joseph François Lafitau because both record and existence of accephali, ignores the fact that Lafitau's project was precisely to find explanations for seemingly un-

natural phenomena in distinct social practices. There can, he argued, be no such things as "men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders" but there might exist tribes who, for cultural reasons, cultivated raised shoulders, thus creating an impression of necklessness. The explanation may sound a little forced - Lafitau's often do - but the distance which separates it from Raleigh's simple reportage is the distance between simple travel literature and a theoretically informed science of man.

The lack of any strong historical argument is further complicated by the very wide range of topics which the book attempts to cover. Many of these have little in common beyond the fact that they occupy the same geographical space: pirates and filibusters rub shoulders with the Jesuit missions to Paraguay which Voltaire ridiculed in *Candide*, with chapters on the English view of Mexico in the eighteenth century and the "prejudices" displayed by the metropolitan Spaniards towards American *criollos*. Duviols is most interesting in precisely those areas where the material is least familiar, in particular the discussions on the European perceptions of colonial societies and the fascinating account of Lima and of the cities of Mexico. The coverage of the more thoroughly researched areas, the discussion of the "bon sauvage", of cannibals and cannibalism, of Giants and Amazons, of the eighteenth-century debate over the "newness" of the New World and its consequent inferiority to the Old, all these, though they contain some interesting insights, are often little more than perfunctory.

This is a curious book. Some earlier version of it earned its author a *doctorat d'État* but there is hardly a trace of the portentous scholarship, and the intellectual originality, which that must have required. What remains is, in fact, a collection - a wonderful collection to be sure - of illustrations from nearly 300 years of travel literature held together by a loose analytical structure which in some places amounts to little more than a series of extended captions.



Diagram of the Maya carved cover of the sepulchre from the Temple of the Inscriptions, Palenque. It is reproduced from *Arts of the Indian Americas: Leaves from the sacred tree by Janaka Highwater* (372pp. Harper and Row, £17.00 0 6 430134 4).

Calamities in a canoe

John Ure

JOHN HARRISON
Up the Creek: An Amazon adventure
181pp. Bradt Publications, 41 Norfolk Road, Chalfont St Peter, Bucks SL9 0LA. £10.95 (paperback, £5.95).
0946631046

This traveller's tale, starts light-heartedly enough, with its jaunty title and opening account of how, despite a fortune-teller forecasting that John Harrison would suffer death by water at the age of thirty-three, he set off at the remotest and most dangerous tributaries of the Amazon - thus braving the prospect of "the Big Gurgle".

The route he chose for his adventure was an ambitious one: up the Jari (which flows from the north into the estuary of the Amazon) and then up one or other of its even smaller tributaries, the watershed which forms the boundary with French Guiana and Surinam in the north, the Amazon, then a long portage - estimated at some fifteen kilometres - and down the banks of several promising-looking rivers that flow into the Amazon. A wooden

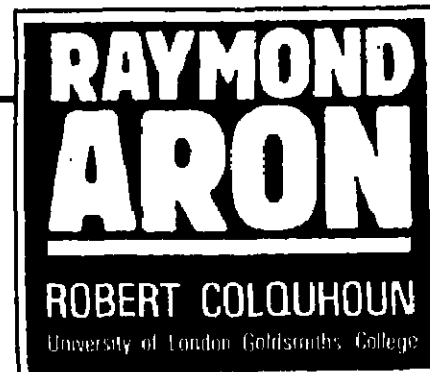
Canadian-type six-metre canoe, in kit form, was purchased; a tough-looking Australian travelling companion was selected; thoughts of sponsorship were rejected as this was to be a trip "for the hell of it"; all seemed set for a cheerfully audacious venture.

But almost from the beginning things started to go wrong. The streams were more beset by rapids and fallen trees than expected; his original companion - after a bad scolding from a split cane, kettle and a series of acrimonious quarrels - gave up and Harrison had to make a fresh start; malaria struck repeatedly and developed Leishmaniasis; they were afflicted by fire-ants, scorpions, hornets, electric eels and - predictably but maddeningly - the ubiquitous mosquitoes. Even the monkeys they shot to eat were riddled with worms. Finally they had to bury one casually encountered acquaintance and leave another behind (through no fault of their own) at a jungle airstrip with no apparent chance of his getting a place on a rescue flight. With so many troubles, it was hardly surprising that they did not succeed in getting over the watershed and completing their journey.

Harrison's account of all this agony is very

different from the light-hearted opening of the book. Good humour is an early casualty. The connoisseur of Anglo-Saxon travel-writing about the Amazon will look here in vain for the camaraderie of Theodore Roosevelt's description of his exploration of the Rio da Dávila, or for the coolly understated reportage of Peter Fleming's *Brazilian Adventure* on the Araguaya, or even for the - more recent - bonhomie of Robin Hanbury-Tenison's log of his waterborne traverse of the Amazon basin. Instead, the reader will find a totally convincing and matter-of-fact account of a grim series of encounters with a variety of predators - some human (in the form of gold-prospectors, geologists, crooked river-boat masters, hard-hearted pilots and others) and some non-human (in the form of alligators, jaguars and the usual catalogue of snakes). In the circumstances it is not surprising that there are frequent bursts of bad temper and even more frequent outbursts of bad language. It was that sort of trip.

But however grim the tale, as a record of courage and endurance it deserves to stand in an honoured place on any shelf devoted to the self-punishing experiences of Anglo-Saxons up the Amazon.



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James and things

Nicola Bradbury

WILLIAM R. GOETZ
Henry James and the Darkest Abyss of Romance
215pp. Louisiana State University Press. £25.
08071 12593

ADELIN R. TINTNER
The Museum World of Henry James
390pp. Michigan: UMI Research Press.
08357 17259

"Immature poets borrow, mature poets steal." Eliot's dictum might (like so much that he wrote) have been lifted from Henry James: though for James the operative verb, with a nice ambiguity, is "appropriate". "To criticize is to appreciate, to appropriate, to take intellectual possession, to establish in fine a relation with the criticized thing and make it one's own." Criticism was creative, in this sense, and imagination above all appropriate; William R. Goetz quotes from *A Small Boy and Others*, James writing on the mystery of "Parisianism":

It was at all events, this mystery, one's property — that of one's mind; and so, once and for all, I helped myself to it from my balcony and tucked it away.

James's tone is a comically sly triumph: not a note William Goetz echoes in *Henry James and the Darkest Abyss of Romance*, his subtle, earnest study of the fascinating, but indeterminate, question of the presence of the author in his work. Adeline R. Tintner, with the authority of a training in both English literature and art history, and the experience of forty years'

study of Henry James, displays no such critical hesitation. In *The Museum World of Henry James* she has taken on James's entire oeuvre, and a wide range of art, from Classical sculpture to the cinematograph, to produce the first extensive study of James's use of actual works of art in his fiction. Her guidance is informed, interesting and masterly. *The Museum World of Henry James* is a classic of James criticism, bridging historical and aesthetic approaches.

The novelist reminded himself to be "as solid and fixed and dense as you can": an instruction the critic must observe, but not always obey. In gathering material from a long career of James studies, Adeline Tintner has overcome the problem of achieving a critical poise in relation to early and developing work. She handles the young James's crudities with sympathetic confidence, and shows clearly how the art that conceals art grew both in subtlety and daring. In "Travelling Companions", for example, his first product of the European experience in 1869, James used both St Peter's and the Piazza San Marco, but Tintner distinguishes between them to explain why one "artistic terminal" eventually ceased to interest the author, while the other, because of its "analogy to drawing room, salon, and theatre", and because it works as an "outdoor museum" which "fits in with the tastes and activities not only of the people in James's fiction but of the whole civilized world", continues to appear in the late work.

It is James's strategy with his "world of things" that Tintner pursues. Her ear for variations of tone complements a critical eye: she

picks up, for example, both a verbal satire and a pictorial joke in "The Madonna of the Future", where Mrs. Coventry, the

"high-priestess of the arts" carries on her bosom the featured masterpiece of the story, a "huge miniature copy of the Madonna della Seggiola". The oxymoron in the description "huge miniature" and the Italian form of the picture's title epitomize the American hostess's pretensions and their absurd manifestation. The placing of the replica of the painting which shows the Christ Child resting on his mother's bosom right on the bosom of Mrs. Coventry is a pictorial joke.

The control of nuance is equally important in Tintner's own terminology, and in the vital sense of interconnectedness between vocabulary and modes of apprehension, comically epitomized in the pun. So she explains that the signal works of art in *The Portrait of a Lady* are each "summoned up for the reader and enmeshed with the plot in a triadic way — as object, symbol, and index"; here she relies on the familiarity of the visual material to sustain an abstract analysis. But turning to "Daisy Miller", she gives a detailed reading of the appearance in the tale of the Velázquez portrait of Pope Innocent X to substantiate her claim that James uses it to make an elaborate, multiple pun on the "innocent". In "The Aspern Papers", Tintner recognizes a Giorgione masterpiece overshadowed in the text by the more familiar Colonnello statue; but the point of her discovery is to illuminate afresh the dominance of the great mercenary, for the Giorgione turns out to be a semiotic red herring.

The Museum World of Henry James covers

Classical to early modern art, since "James never identified himself with any 'ism' in art". The pastoral, derived from Virgilian tradition (not the simpler Theocritan idyll), and refined through Rocco Arcadianism, reaches James through Watteau and through Balzac; it provides a poignant mode for *The Ambassadors* — "pregnant with the sense of disaster in the new future" — and for *The Wings of the Dove*. Though James's most celebrated artistic resonances are with the Italian Renaissance, Tintner shows the importance of both earlier and later movements. She corrects the misconception that James ignored Symbolism by demonstrating the significance of Decadent images and Symbolist figures in the tales of the 1880s and in *The Sacred Fount*. She does not simply list visual structures, but proposes an explanation for James's exploitation of this mode, to go beyond retinal vision towards an interpretive apprehension, whilst offering his own work as a form of criticism of the "sensational and eroticism of the Decadents". It is not pictures, but "the operative image" which works in James's text.

Pictures are included in this book, however: one hundred illustrations, some denatured in black-and-white, but serving for reference to their points. This is a treasure house of detail, but no indifferent whole. Waddesdon Manor, the Corbett-Fitzsimmons prizefight, the three desks in a single room at Lamb House (for writing standing, sitting, or lying down), jostle for attention in a view of James's work which is grounded in good sense and lightened with ingenious perceptions.

Writers hopeless with money

David Grylls

NORMAN RUSSELL
The Novelist and Mammon: Literary responses to the world of commerce in the nineteenth century
226pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £22.50.
0198128517

Victorian novels are grounded in commerce — quite often in commercial malpractice. Failing firms and secret forgeries, craft speculations and risky investments, are well-worn counters in their narrative currency; bankers, brokers, merchants and financiers, railway and insurance promoters, are frequently called on for piling up suspense or pointing moral balance-sheets. One could virtually draw up a paradigm of commercial drama in Victorian fiction. An ambitious financier, of obscure origin, equipped with a worthy child and a sinister subordinate, floats a titanic company whose safety is as certain as its exact nature is unknown. Tempted by the prospect of rapid enrichment, avaricious idlers and humble innocents are persuaded to part with their little all. The company crashes, the financier "bolts", a panic ensues and hundreds are ruined. In the closing chapters the virtuous may be saved by a providential legacy.

A searching look at the commercial realities underlying such stereotypes is afforded by Norman Russell's *The Novelist and Mammon*. Drawing on contemporary historians of business, he provides a fund of crisp information on most features of Victorian commerce. He describes the "company mania" of 1825, the later railway speculations, the bank-failures of the 1830s. Familiar figures of Victorian finance — Hudson, Sadler, the Rothschilds — have separate accounts devoted to them; nuggets of more recherché knowledge are regularly deposited in footnotes. Russell argues that two factors in nineteenth-century commerce encouraged violent bursts of speculation and widespread fraud and mismanagement. One was the imperfect state of company law, especially before 1844; the other, the cyclic pattern of commercial crises, which erupted, with apparent inevitability, every ten years or so.

Russell's treatment of Victorian commercial practice is meticulously accurate and determinedly fair. He distinguishes carefully between jobbers and brokers, merchants and moneylenders, the imprudent and the berrap

When he turns to Victorian fiction, however, it rapidly emerges that most of his authors are much less informed about commerce than he is — and much more prejudiced. Russell is willing to forgive them for this — the novelist, he contends, is a creative "genius" with "his own inner purposes". But he still feels obliged to amend their accounts: Bulwer Lytton "misunderstands the mercantile uses of capital", Mrs Gaskell's Thornton in *North and South* had no need to travel to Le Havre to invest; the rising price of cotton when the answer was available in Liverpool. Repeatedly, Russell warns the reader to "exercise caution" at "be on his guard" against the novelistic depiction of commerce.

This literal-mindedness sometimes pays dividends — as when Russell exposes the frequent equation of commerce with usury. But too often it inflates the importance of commerce, undervaluing other concerns. Such Melnotte's speculations, though central to *The Way We Live Now*, are only one component of a general panorama of cheating and chicanery. Similarly, Dickens's financier Merdle, surrounded by images from religion and legend, is quite as much a creature of parable as a contemporary portrait. Russell, however, goes over the books in search of real-life originals. Merdle was indebted to John Sadler and about his education, even sceptics will put up with circus performances such as Robert MacNeil rowing bodily up the Thames, Robert MacNeil striding bodily round Stonehenge, and Robert MacNeil bending over backwards to kiss the Blarney Stone (a moving, appropriate and profoundly symbolic act in this context).

What is the basis of MacNeil's impeccable credibility? It is, of course, his English. In the very first episode of the series the current Editor of the *Supplement*, to the *Oxford English Dictionary* makes an important but undervalued point about the trustworthiness of BBC announcements. And in many people's minds, there is an almost mystical equation between speaking a certain brand of English and speaking the truth. Now MacNeil's voice is a voice, slightly, bolder version of the Old World and New World audiences as the Editor of this Voice is an English with no pride, no vested interests, neither

Present laughter

D. J. Enright

FRED METCALF
The Penguin Dictionary of Modern Humorous Quotations
319pp. Viking. £10.95.
0670 80035 X

It was prudent of Fred Metcalf to start off with a quotation of his own: "Humour is in the funny-bone of the beholder." And he does well to admit that more of the quotations he has assembled "were fished from the murky waters of scorn and cynicism than from the sparkling streams of whimsy and innocent merriment". In favouring the down-putting over the uplifting he has merely obeyed the spirit of the times. It's not the editor's fault.

So how a proportion of these items registered as humorous that the book had me feeling nervously for my funny-bone. Could some zealous medico have taken premature advantage of that Donor Card, made out in a moment of careless uplift? To begin with, the pointlessness, itself the flip side of whimsy: "Prove to me that you're no fool. / Walk across my swimming pool" (*Jesus Christ Superstar*); Woody Allen's "How can I believe in God when just last week I got my tongue caught in the roller of an electric typewriter?" (an event that might lead some people to believe in God); "Secant, cosine, tangent, sine / Logarithm, logarithm . . ." (the cheer of the California Institute of Technology football team); or "Success didn't spoil me; I've always been invulnerable," from Fran Lebowitz (who she? Somebody famous for being in this book? Ah no, *See Vogue* has hailed her as "the natural successor to Dorothy Parker"). The chauvinist Miss Piggy — with twenty-four extracts from her *Guide to Life, As Told to Henry Beard* — shouldn't have been allowed to hog the limelight; here's how she copes with foreigners: "Personality who bringsulates les munchables. I call, summoning the waiter. 'If it does you please, transportez (trans-port-TAY) to moi's tablette one gigantical smithereenide dit chocolate cakefication . . .'" and so forth. However, England and the English take a worse beating. "So little, England. Little music. Little art. Timid. Tasteful. Nice", gasps Alan Bennett.

As Yeats noted of poetry, jokes may take hours to invent but they need to seem a moment's thought. So many of the jokes here fail to leave the launching pad:

Knock, knock.
Who's there?

No arguing with English

continued from page 1062

prompted to do so, perhaps by the group of professional praise-singers who accompany the Paramount Chief wherever he goes. On film, *The Story of English* is told by Robert MacNeil, who wrote most of the book, he cannot hide behind the anonymity of print. But MacNeil does not need the Paramount Chief's praise-singers either. He has already been identified by the media as a wise talker, "a man of words". Given this identification, even sceptics will put up with circus performances such as Robert MacNeil rowing bodily up the Thames, Robert MacNeil striding bodily round Stonehenge, and Robert MacNeil bending over backwards to kiss the Blarney Stone (a moving, appropriate and profoundly symbolic act in this context).

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Astronaut.
Astronaut Who?
Astronaut what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country.

Similarly, Lily Tomlin's "Reality is just a crutch for people who can't cope with drugs", and David Frost, under the heading "Despair": "He's turned his life around. He used to be depressed and miserable. Now he's miserable and depressed." Similarly, Rita Mae Brown, describing her lesbianism as an act of Christian charity: "All those women out there are praying for a man, and I'm giving them my share." In the same category Quentin Crisp does rather better with "I became one of the stately homos of England". And the kiddies are catered for: "Q: What word is always pronounced wrong? A: 'Wrong'."

"When I was eight I ran away with a circus . . . Then, when I was nine, they made me bring it back" (Eric Morecambe). There are forty-seven quotations from Morecambe and Wise here, as compared with a mere four from The Two Ronnies and two from Benny Hill; twenty-nine from W. C. Fields, five of them exhibiting his well-known aversion to children; forty-five from Woody Allen; nineteen from Bob Hope; fourteen from Fred Allen. Stand-up comics rarely stand up well in cold print. "Did you see my Bottom at Stratford-upon-Avon?" Their ubiquity may have to do with one of the editor's objectives — to provide a source book for speakers. Speakers at the AGM of the Amalgamated Misanthropes, Misogynists and Masochists, perhaps? Or — "Whenever a friend succeds, a little something in me dies" (Gore Vidal) — a Friendly Society dinner? Or a Poetry Society conference? "Poetry is sissy stuff that rhymes. Weedy people say la and fic and swoon when they see a bunch of daffodils" (*The Complete Moleworth*). Or even a working lunch at the RSPCA: "I bit the head off a live bat the other night. It was like eating a Crunchie wrapped in chamois leather" (Ozzy Osborne, a rock musician). There is precious little, however, for the hard-pressed father of the bride: among the fifty entries on Marriage and Weddings, the average offering is William Cole's: "I think of my wife, and I think of Lot / And I think of the lucky break he got."

The wiser aphorisms tend not to be particularly humorous; but it is nice to find some sobriety. As in Orwell on advertising: "the rattling of a stick inside a swill bucket"; Lord Asquith: "Youth would be an ideal state if it came a little later in life"; Clifton Fadiman: "Ennui, felt on the proper occasions, is a sign of intelligence"; and Mark Twain: "Man is the

old-school-tye nor radical, polite, objective, humane, cultured: all the things we wish (or, by implication, ought to wish) we were. On the one occasion when MacNeil has to utter a rude word (explaining the acronym *snafu*), it is discreetly bleeped out for him by some benign linguistic Big Brother in the background.

It is interesting that throughout the television series, although we often see MacNeil in places of historical importance for his story, thus authenticating his presumed knowledge of the facts, rarely if ever do we see him speaking to anyone. He does not conduct interviews. He stands outside the story he is telling. He speaks only to "us" in that superauthentic brand of

FIFTY YEARS ON
The TLS of September 26, 1936, carried a review by B. K. Long, under the heading 'Johannesburg', of D. Jacobson's Fifty Golden Years of the Rand, 1886-1936 and Adèle Lezard's Gold Blast: Being the Romantic History of the Goldfields, from which the following extracts are taken:

Mr Jacobson is mining editor of the *Star*, the dignified and authoritative afternoon paper of Johannesburg. He leaves the romance of Johannesburg to take care of itself and devotes himself to a plain, accurate and concise account of its birth, growth and present degree of development: with the result that the true romance of this amazing city and its fabulous industry sparkles and glitters in its apparently hum-drum pages, far more effec-

tively than in Miss Lezard's deliberately high-coloured writing . . . Goldmining is a highly technical process and as interesting as is technical. Mr Jacobson explains its mysteries simply and concisely, missing nothing . . . Those who want to know what it feels like to go 8,000ft into the earth, in a lift which rushes down a mining shaft at an incredible speed, will prefer to read Miss Lezard; for description is her strong point. Whether she is lashing the villainies of some of the early Johannesburg pioneers, such as the late Sir John Robinson, or painting an impressionistic verbal picture of hectic moments on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, or putting elaborate soliloquies into the mouths of the men who discovered the gold reef more than fifty years ago, she commands a natural, though undisciplined, eloquence.

Love is a four-letter word, "only the dirty trick played on us to achieve continuation of the species" (W. Somerset Maugham), or "the delusion that one woman differs from another" (H. L. Mencken), although Mae West reckons it conquers all things except poverty and toothache. For the most part Fred Metcalf likes his humour sick, or at least off colour. Lenny Bruce tells how his mother-in-law broke up his marriage: his wife came home from work one day and found him in bed with her. The ever-ready P. J. O'Rourke, with fifty-seven citations, reflects that, while public mourning is out of fashion, "some flashier kinds of widows may insist on sleeping with only black men during the first year after the death".

Of course there is some good fun lurking here; it would be funny if there weren't. The distinguished Italian writer, Graffio, is responsible for much of it — "Hypochondria is the only disease I haven't got" — along with his busy friend Anon, who makes short work of Milton: "The first pair ate the first apple." Bette Davis, on another actress, is pithy: "She's the original good time that was had by all." Showbiz looms large. Bob Hope comments that Zsa Zsa Gabor "got married as a one-off and it was so successful she turned it into a series". Miss Gabor is no push-over, though: "Macho does not prove much", a thought neatly complemented by Katharine Whitehorn: "No nice men are good at getting taxis." And all credit to the tireless Fran Lebowitz for reminding us that "Food is an important part of a balanced diet".

Oscar Wilde is the clear leader, with 188 entries to his name. Shaw ("I often quote myself. It adds spice to my conversation"), Churchill, Mark Twain, Chesterton, Mencken, are among the most quoted — together with P. G. Wodehouse (scoring 123), Noël Coward, Ogden Nash, Dorothy Parker and her successor, and Anon, who in this context figure as intellectual giants. It was less than prudent of the publishers to quote one of Anon's gems in their hand-out: "Thank you for sending me a copy of your book. I'll waste no time in reading it."

That is why *The Story of English* can get away with the ultimate deception of telling us how "we" and our ancestors, in our racial and social diversity, have all been contributors to this splendid saga, each and every one of us; but at the same time both present and exemplify a rather different cultural reality, in which the weaker succumb to the stronger and there is just no arguing with the worldwide linguistic message of English. *The Story of English* scrupulously avoids making an issue of whether some "varieties" of English are "better" than others: but, in the end, "we" are left in no doubt which is the best.

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